

IN THESE TIMES

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The First Real Defeat

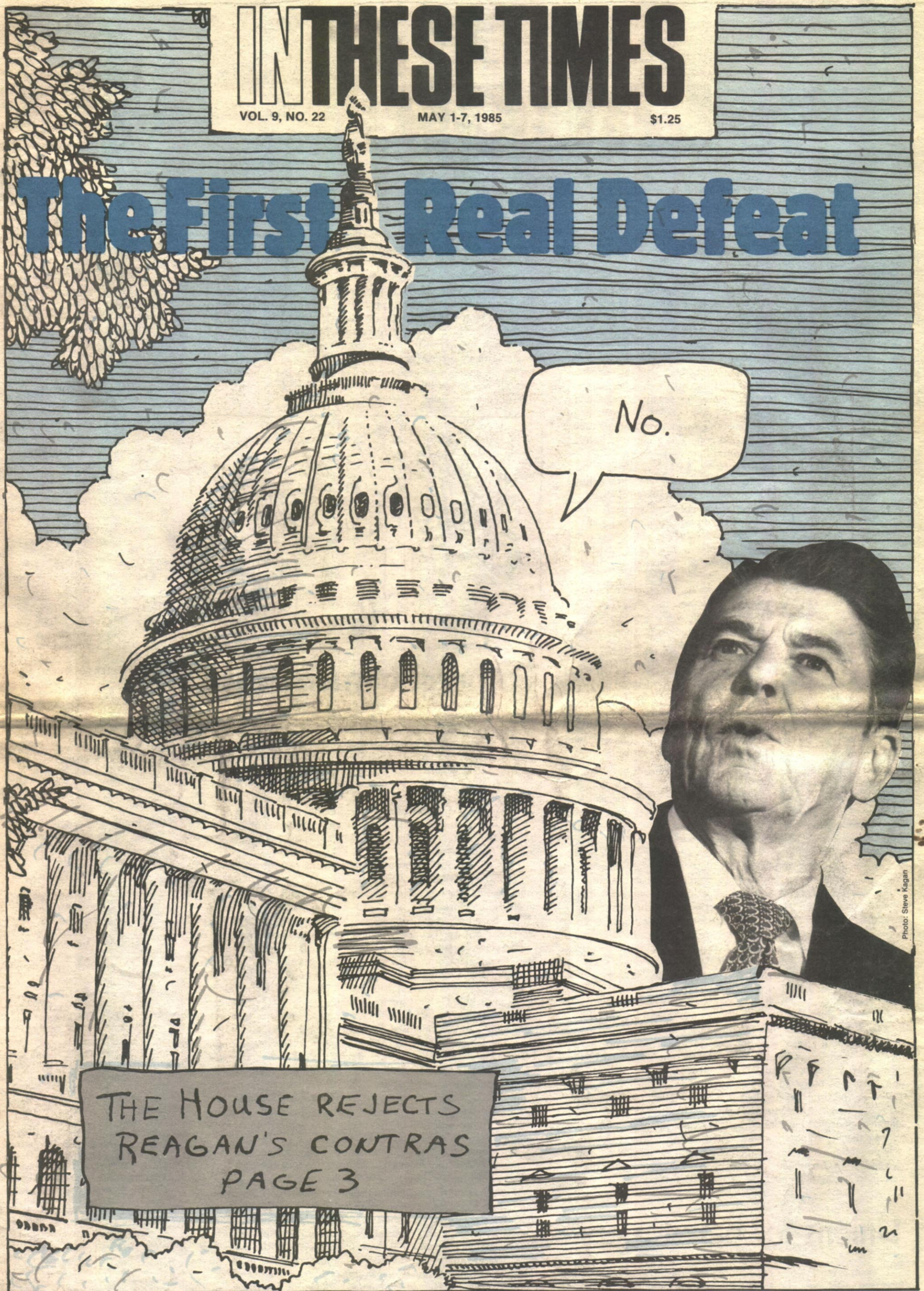


Photo: Steve Kagan

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INSIDE LABOR

By David Moberg

Teamsters to tally votes

When Teamsters union officials tally votes on the new truckers' contract on May 8, they may not like the results. Although few critics of the agreement expect the two-thirds vote needed to reject it, truck drivers and loading dock workers at membership meetings in many large locals, especially on both coasts, have recommended against it in strong terms—often unanimous and occasionally rowdy.

Since the National Master Freight Agreement that set uniform labor costs nationwide was first established in 1964, it has suffered from exceptions and erosion. The 1982 contract froze wages and diverted most cost-of-living payments into benefits. The number of union truckers has been halved from its high point to roughly 200,000, as independent owner-operators and non-union companies have grabbed a bigger share in a deregulated industry.

This year's contract offers the lure of a \$1.19-an-hour raise over three years for drivers averaging \$13.30 an hour and some pension improvements that will make the bitter parts palatable to older, more secure workers. But there are significant concessions: newly hired workers start at 70 percent of standard pay, reaching parity in the fourth year; wages for casual workers are cut by one-fifth; cost-of-living protection was not restored (although part of the raise is labeled "cost of living"); and the door was opened for management to change work rules more easily.

Ironically, the concessions are likely to help most the companies that need it least. As Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) organizer Ken Paff noted, "The concessions were given to big companies to drive small companies out of business. You only get to pay the 70 percent rate if you're hiring. 'Mom and Pop' aren't hiring or using casuals. Roadway [one of the 'big four'] is."

The large, profitable companies specializing in less-than-truckload shipments are less challenged by deregulation than truckload shippers of single commodities. They will be able to shift more work to lower-paid casual workers, especially on the loading docks, and to hire experienced drivers from bankrupt small firms for lower pay. The contract also provides no new limits on overtime, which the companies have exploited extensively since it has been cheaper than rehiring.

Non-union threats to the master freight agreement have come from the big companies themselves. Most have set up one or more of these "double-breasted" operations, and they are growing. Roadway's Spartan subsidiary, for example, now has 21 terminals in six states. Although the contract includes new language attempting to enforce union standards for all employees, Paff argues that there are significant loopholes in it—just as there were in the proscriptions included in the 1982 contract. Paff also questions whether Teamsters leaders will enforce the new language any better than the old.

Last year Teamster President Jackie Presser was soundly defeated when he tried to push some of these concessions through in the middle of the contract. This time he has the money bait. But several local leaders not associated with TDU have been very critical. Others try to straddle the fence between restive members and their superiors.

Sam Theodis, president of Local 407 in Cleveland, Presser's hometown, was especially upset with the new-hire rate. "It's a two-tier contract," he said. "I don't care what they call it." Newly hired drivers aren't apprentices, he argued, especially when they often have years of experience with other firms. The low rate for casual workers will lead to part-time rather than full-time hiring, he said. But he was pessimistic about a rejection vote, despite a unanimous "no" from members at his local's meeting, or about the unpopular contract threatening Presser politically. "New hires don't vote, and casuals don't vote," he observed.

Paff, on the other hand, thinks that the long-term weakening of the master freight agreement may coincide with the evolution of an effective opposition. He thinks the union's leadership sees its future in strengthening the big companies further. But that, he argues, will only put those companies in a better position to demand big wage cuts and "pull a Greyhound," attempting to break the union and the master freight agreement three or six years from now.

Unions for part-timers?

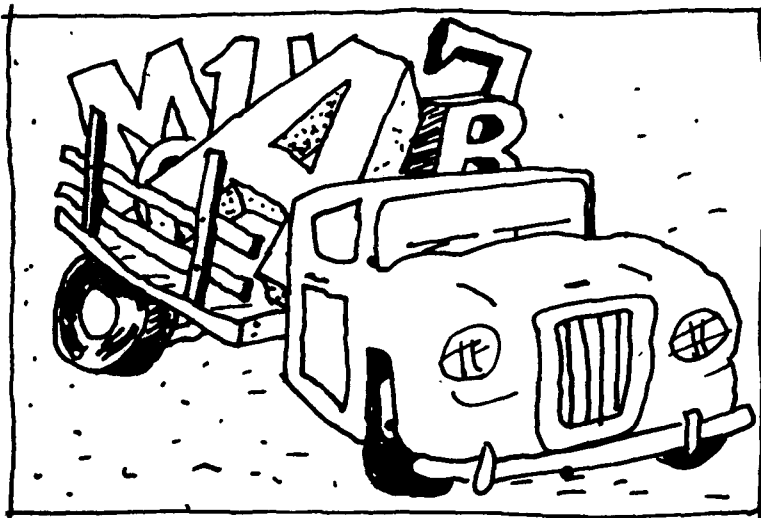
The drift toward two-tier pay, more part-time or casual workers, increased overtime and reliance on non-union subsidiaries reflected in the Teamster contract is part of a broader trend. Employers are increasingly reluctant to hire full-time employees, since they want to avoid full pay and benefits and also want to hire and fire easily to adjust to market shifts or new technology. Many unions are tempted to accommodate them in order to protect their core of members, who dominate in votes. One big price: worker solidarity is undermined and, with that, union power, credibility and legitimacy. In many cases, it is a first step to displacing full-time workers or putting pressure downward on their wages and working conditions.

Two-tier systems were included in 8 percent of all non-construction

contracts in 1984, up from 5 percent in 1983, according to a survey by the private Bureau of National Affairs. They were most common in non-manufacturing industries—17 percent of all contracts, up from 9 percent in 1983. Only 4 percent of manufacturing had two-tier arrangements, but that also doubled the previous year. The Food and Commercial Workers negotiated the greatest number by far, followed by Machinists, Auto Workers and Teamsters.

Part-time work, which averages one-third less in pay than full-time work and usually provides little or no benefits, has also been on the rise. The numbers of involuntary part-time workers, probably underestimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, has grown since 1976 from 4.1 percent of the workforce to 5.5 percent.

This may be part of the "Japanization" of the U.S. economy—a small, relatively secure core of workers buttressed by overworked, underpaid, insecure fringes. With social services and economic support, already less in the U.S. than in Europe, being trimmed, such workers are especially vulnerable.



To merge or merge not?

While the truckers' contract, once the jewel in the crown of the Teamsters, crumbles, there is a determined group within the International Typographical Union (ITU) that still sees the Teamsters as powerful and wants to merge with them. The ITU, the oldest and one of the most democratic U.S. unions, has slipped to 45,000 active members (and 21,000 retirees) from its peak of 90,000 in the late '60s largely because of technological changes in the printing industry. Two years ago it was close to a merger with the Newspaper Guild, but then-President Joseph Bingel pulled a surprise out of his hat at the 1983 convention. Presser arrived with a glowing merger proposal, and the Guild merger died.

Merging with the Teamsters offended many typesetters with a sense of their own democratic traditions and a desire to link with other unions in their field. It became a central issue in the re-run of an election for president, won twice and definitively by Robert S. McMichen, an opponent of the Teamster merger. The AFL-CIO, worried about the Teamster bid and anxious to further mergers of related unions, aided negotiations to merge the ITU with the 165,000-member Graphic Communications International Union (GCIU), itself a merger of the Graphic Arts and Pressmen's unions.

But Presser continued his bid for the ITU, supporting a pro-Teamster group within ITU, raiding its locals (resulting in three still-contested votes for Teamsters, one rejection and one vote that went non-union) and lobbying hard against the merger with GCIU. Pro-Teamster typographical union officers fomented worries among GCIU leaders that half the ITU would go with the Teamsters, leaving GCIU with more liabilities and less income than it expected, according to ITU spokesman David Prosten. Also, GCIU officials began worrying about their liabilities for the long-established Printers' Home for aged or infirmed typesetters. As a result, in March the GCIU executive board withdrew approval of the merger that was scheduled for a membership vote in both unions.

"In my opinion these are things that can be resolved," ITU Vice President William Boorman said. "It was a disappointing and bitter setback, but I have a feeling in my heart it's not final."

Although he acknowledges that roughly one-third of ITU members may be pro-Teamster, he thinks only a few of them would defect if there were a merger with the Graphic Communications workers, who have 700 locals that are mainly side-by-side in workplaces with the typographical union's 490 locals (compared with the overlap of only 15 locals with the Teamsters). Presser has won staff allies within ITU by promising jobs, but Boorman argues that the Teamster offer is unbelievable. The huge deficit it entails would soon lead to broken promises, he said.

In order to resolve the Teamster issue once and for all (and to render a lawsuit calling for a vote moot), the ITU executive board recently voted to take a mail ballot this July on the proposal to merge with the Teamsters. If that is defeated, the officers will presumably continue their bid to merge with the GCIU. That will undoubtedly have to wait until a successor is chosen early next year to GCIU President Kenneth Brown, who just announced his retirement. But if the Teamsters win, other AFL-CIO unions may be next in line as mergers and raids make up for membership losses.



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IN THESE TIMES



Marcelo Montecino

Reagan rhetoric backfired, but fight over *contra* aid isn't over

By Joy Hackel

WASHINGTON

IN WHAT HAS BEEN TERMED THE first "major foreign policy defeat" for the Reagan administration, the president could not muster sufficient votes in Congress to support a renewal of aid for the anti-Sandinista rebels.

In a historic vote last Tuesday, the Senate narrowly accepted and the House then rejected a watered-down Reagan request for \$14 million to rekindle aid for the *contras*. The 53-46 margin in the Senate was the slimmest victory the Republican-dominated body had given the administration in its requests for *contra* aid, and it signaled the waning support for the president in coming votes.

The Reagan administration was slow to acknowledge the necessity of learning a new game—compromise. Only 75 minutes before the roll call, Reagan released a conciliatory letter to the Senate. It included an assurance to renew direct U.S. negotiations with Nicaragua and a promise to "press for" a ceasefire. This fallback position, designed to bring a substantial number of Democrats on board the Reagan plan and address the offer from Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega conveyed by Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA), won over only 10 Democrats.

Other last-minute efforts to forge a consensus around alternative legislation fell flat. The administration failure to bring over Senate Democrats at this crucial juncture was due to disagreement over three issues: the role of the CIA in the distribution of funds, the resumption of direct talks among the U.S., the Sandinistas and the rebels, and the decision as to who would monitor a *contra*/Sandinista ceasefire.

As expected, the House voted down the Reagan request. The 248-180 decision exceeded by four votes the margin of any previous rejection. House Speaker Tip O'Neill lead the intensive lobby by House leadership to defeat the proposal.

In the battle that followed the next day, the House rejected two alternative proposals to provide aid to the region. The Democrat-dominated House first endorsed the Barnes-Hamilton plan for defensive purposes—to give the House ammunition in the event that the proposal proceeded to a conference committee decision. The Barnes-Hamilton alternative would have provided \$10 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or the

Red Cross for humanitarian aid to Nicaraguan refugees outside their country and \$4 million to Contadora groups. In addition, the plan would have continued the ban on U.S. funding for military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua. The existing prohibition on funding will expire in October.

Next, in a cliff-hanger, the House rejected by 215-213 a substitute put forward by House Minority leader Robert Michel (R-IL). The proposal, which met many of the president's policy objectives, supplied \$14 million to the rebels administered through the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), but argued that the aid be in "non-lethal" form.

After defeating the Michel substitute, the House then voted a second time on the Barnes-Hamilton proposal since the "king of the mountain" procedure established for the vote by the rules committee stipulated that a valid vote must be the final vote standing. In this re-vote on Barnes-Hamilton, liberal Democrats who opposed aid joined with Republicans who viewed the alternative as a betrayal of the *contras*. With this strange alliance, the entire measure was defeated 303-123.

The Democrats were under no obligation to formulate an alternative to Reagan's proposal. Yet political motivations, primarily the fear of being considered "soft on Sandinismo," led many Democrats in both the House and the Senate to search for a bipartisan compromise and a "middle ground."

Conservative Democrats joined with Senate Republicans to pass Reagan's request for "humanitarian" aid that would have allowed Nicaraguan insurgents to offset money from other sources for arms. The Reagan plan was referred to as a *contra* "escrow account" because it freed up alternative funding for military use. The definition of "humanitarian" aid can be mere hairsplitting since it includes items such as uniforms, trucks and communications equipment which provide the infrastructure for insurgency.

Administration tactics backfire.

The administration, having successfully orchestrated a major high pressure lobbying effort on the MX, had launched a frontal assault on those in Congress who opposed its covert aid package. Reagan advisors including Secretary of State George Shultz, Communications Director Patrick Buchanan and National Security Council Advisor Robert McFarlane advocated the request for

renewal and a high-profile campaign that tied the vote to Reagan's prestige.

As the campaign continued, the administration overstated its case for continued funding. Reagan's credibility was also undercut when the Vatican contradicted the president, arguing that Pope John Paul II had never endorsed U.S. policies in Nicaragua. Likewise, Colombia's President Betancur denied that he had supported Reagan's policy, which he characterized as "no longer a peace proposal but a preparation for war."

Reagan declared that his request for renewed military aid had the support of Contadora, yet his officials were unable to name a single Latin American head of state who had endorsed the request. In the final hours before the vote on Reagan's "peace plan," members in both houses brandished last week's *Newsweek* photographs of a *contra* execution and recalled that Reagan had equated the rebels with America's "founding fathers."

The administration effort featured a series of fallback proposals. Yet in none of these compromise "peace plans" did Reagan win over sufficient converts. The president originally requested a straight-out renewal of military aid to the rebel forces. One day later he modified the request to include a caveat that *contra* aid would not be used for military purposes if the Sandinistas entered into talks with the *contras* by June 1 and also agreed to new elections. If the Sandinistas refused to negotiate, the U.S. would sanction military aid. Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto characterized the plan as a proposal to the Sandinistas to "drop dead or we [the U.S.] will kill you." Reagan's final compromise in the version of the proposal that passed the Senate dropped the request for military aid altogether and authorized funds for expenditures other than "weapons of war."

In the final weeks before the vote, grassroots opposition to *contra* aid kept a high profile across the country. Tens of thousands of activists converged in six cities coast to coast for four days of protest known as April Actions (see pages 8 and 9). In Washington, D.C., the actions culminated with a massive civil disobedience and lobbying effort the day before the decision on the Reagan request. The Pledge of Resistance, a national coalition, called for local rallies and lobbying on Capitol Hill. SANE released radio and television ads, while Hollywood celebrities spoke out against renewal of *contra* aid.

The administration will continue to rekindle support for the *contras*.

One week prior to the vote, the *New York Times* leaked a secret report in which Reagan had formally requested the \$14 million in military aid from Congress. The classified report ruled out a policy of "containment" for Nicaragua and argued that, although U.S. military force was not an immediate necessity, direct American military intervention "must realistically be recognized as an eventual option." Reagan justified the aid request as part of an administration plan to swell rebel forces (which now number less than 20,000) to as many as 35,000. Opponents who argued that the president's plan advocated "gunboat diplomacy" seized upon the newfound evidence.

What's next?

It's likely that the Reagan administration will now vigorously pursue several alternative channels to keep aid flowing to the *contras*. According to intelligence sources, the administration has already drawn up a request for \$28 million in *contra* aid for its fiscal year 1986 intelligence appropriations budget. The request will probably be voted on in September.

In the interim, Reagan will likely continue to encourage third-country financing of the *contras* by U.S. allies such as Taiwan, South Korea and Israel. In addition, the U.S. is likely to maintain or even step up the pace of military maneuvers in the area, which leave behind infrastructure and supplies for use by the *contras*.

The administration will continue to rekindle support for the *contras* with pleas for humanitarian refugee relief that could be used to support *contra* forces. This option may prove increasingly successful as the *contras* take on an underdog image in the U.S. media.

The administration has already acknowledged that it may attempt to attach to an unrelated bill a "non-germane amendment" for humanitarian aid to refugees in Honduras. Other options open to the administration include bolstering AID projects that already operate in *contra*-controlled areas. Last fall the Defense Department was granted authority to ship privately collected "humanitarian" aid to Central American refugees free of charge. Conservative groups such as Woody Jenkins' "Friends of the Americas" have already taken advantage of the legislation and are likely to increase their efforts to provide "humanitarian" relief in collaboration with the Pentagon.

Each *contra* aid option would require the cooperation of the Honduran military and government. Currently Honduras provides base camps and some logistical support for at least 6,000 *contras*. Honduras, however, is re-evaluating its commitment to the anti-Sandinista rebels as the U.S.' status as the *contras*' main public backer is questioned.

Leading Republicans, as well as Democrats, have declared support for escalating economic pressure on the Sandinistas. The U.S., which continues to be Nicaragua's largest trading partner, is in the position to "make the Nicaraguan economy scream"—as it did to Chile under Salvador Allende—by escalating its trade embargo. Increasing tensions or even a break in diplomatic relations and travel restrictions are also likely.

Although Democrats did not come to the aid of the *contras* on this go-round, many continue to endorse loudly the objectives of the administration policy. Rep. James Jones (D-OK) may have reflected many Democrats' opinion when during the recent debate he called for an alternative "middle course" for Nicaragua that would "move diplomatic pressure for peace to the front burner, and move military pressure to the back burner, but keep both on the stove."

The *contras*, although clearly in limbo, may yet be resurrected as the centerpiece of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. ■

Joy Hackel works for Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America (PACCA) and the Institute for Policy Studies.

IN SHORT

Beth Maschinot

Sour grapes

Three California families took on a prosperous wine grape rancher in Sonoma County and last week they won an unprecedented \$300,000 in an out-of-court settlement. Leroy Rasmussen owns 150 acres of prime land in this grape-growing county (estimated value \$4.5 million) and gets good prices for his grapes from California wineries. Rasmussen also gets a "good" price for the one-room shacks he rents to the 10 families that live on his property year-round. For an average of \$200 a month, the growers live in what a California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) attorney called "intolerable squalor." Edie Sussman, the CRLA lead attorney in the suit, said the living conditions were unbelievable: "Raw sewage flowed inside and outside the dwellings; rats, mice and cockroaches were everywhere; roofs were falling in; no heat was provided during the winter and the contaminated well water caused serious illnesses among the tenants."

Besides his blatant neglect, Rasmussen also took an active role in stifling any complaints from the workers, many of them undocumented and particularly susceptible to threats of deportation. But one tenant, Esperanza Valencia, defied Rasmussen and began to informally organize the others. As her complaints grew, the owner “evicted” the Valencia family—first bulldozing ditches around their car so they couldn’t move it, finally heading the bulldozer toward them as they stood in the shack watching. Valencia was not an easy person to intimidate, however, and called on the CRLA to help her fight Rasmussen.

One year of investigation and 1,000 pages of testimony later, the CRLA had a clear case against Rasmussen. The grower decided to settle out of court a few days before the case was due to go to trial. The \$300,000 will be spread out over the next 14 years, including \$500 a month for the children of the three couples. And for the next six months, while Rasmussen is supposed to bring conditions up to code, his other tenants who weren't a part of the suit will have free rent.

Though conditions on Rasmussen's ranch are "extreme," Tony Wilde of the CRLA said they are not uncommon. At a press conference last week, the CRLA unveiled a plan for its 13 offices across the state to go after the other particularly "nasty" landowners who've also preyed on their low-paid farm workers.

In for the kill

Four months after the poison-gas leak in Bhopal killed thousands of Indians, the legal killing has begun in the U.S. Personal injury attorneys and representatives for both Union Carbide and the Indian government descended on One Federal Plaza in New York City in mid-April for a pre-trial conference to decide how to proceed with litigation. The hearing came in the wake of a suit filed April 9 by the law firm of Robins, Zelle, Larson & Kaplan on behalf of the Indian government which seeks an unspecified amount in damages for victim compensation and emergency aid costs. The Indian Parliament recently passed an ordinance giving the government exclusive right to represent those entitled to claims. But a group of Indian attorneys, pushed by their American colleagues, have petitioned India's supreme court to have the law overturned.

U.S. District Judge John Keenan instructed participants to discuss proposed interim relief measures by May 1. He also gave the plaintiff's attorneys until April 23 to select a three-person Executive Committee to oversee the complex litigation. The committee will include a representative for the Indian government and two members to be chosen from the more than 80 lawyers who have filed suits on behalf of Bhopal victims. New York's F. Lee Bailey, San Francisco's Melvin Belli and Michael Ciresi of the Minneapolis-based catastrophe specialists Robins-Zelle were among the hundreds of attorneys vying for the two slots. Keenan has yet to decide whether to hear individual cases or turn them into a mandatory class-action or a mandatory consolidation. Opting for a group suit would bar suits by individuals who might come forward later.

Creativity was the order of the day at the podium as the personal injury lawyers tried to win Keenan's approval. All advocated some sort of temporary relief for the survivors, and most opposed the class-action concept. Greed seemed the only constant. "I'm concerned with the woman who lost her baby on that night," said a tanned F. Lee Bailey, trying to garner support for a compensation by need approach. "But I'm

more concerned with the baby who lost its mother on that night." Bailey's law firm had earlier accused other groups of attorneys of being "undemocratic" in their quest for the lead position. Belli retorted in kind, saying, "No one wants F. Lee Bailey around."

The personal injury specialists weren't the only vultures circling at the hearing. Ciresi, heading Robins, Zelle, Larson & Kaplan and representing the Indian government, argued to Judge Keenan that only the government was in a position to negotiate a settlement. Keenan quickly disagreed. The firm has been criticized for conflict of interest because another client, Chicago-based Kemper Corporation, is a Union Carbide insurer. Robins-Zelle is representing Kemper after it refused to pay about \$70 million in claims in the MGM Grand Hotel disaster; MGM promptly filed suit. The firm has also represented insurers in lawsuits stemming from the 1979 nuclear accident at Three Mile Island, the 1981 collapse of the skywalk at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kansas City, Mo., and the recent collapse of the Silverdome roof in Pontiac, Mich.

And while attorneys for the claimants maneuvered to grab as much of the action as possible, Union Carbide stalled. Carbide's attorney, Bud G. Holman, avoided the question of interim relief, saying, "Giving money to the Red Cross doesn't put money in the hands of the people who need it." He criticized the Indian government for failing to provide the corporation statistics on the number of people killed and injured and suggested that it might be found partially liable for the tragedy. Holman concluded his statements for the corporation by saying, "This may not be the most shining hour for the American bar."

Divestment demos

Claiming a “victory” for their three-week-old blockade of Hamilton Hall, Columbia anti-apartheid protesters

called it off last week and are moving on to other strategies to force Columbia's board of trustees to divest from South Africa. Student spokesman Daniel Fass said that Judge Burton Sherman's April 22 order to open the administration building didn't affect their decision to end the blockade: "We never expected arrests, even after the order. We have too much community support." Instead, Fass claimed, protesters are "escalating" the pressure with a series of rallies and blockades. On April 25 the demonstrators were scheduled to march to a Harlem church to help kick off a voter-registration drive and to hear Oliver Tombo, president of South Africa's African National Congress. The next day they had scheduled a city-wide march on the South African consulate. The students also plan to blockade the entrances to Columbia on Commencement Day. Responding to the criticism that the protesters' new tactics seem less direct and perhaps less effective, Fass said that giving breathing space to Columbia administrators was intentional: "We want to give the university some time to make their decision without making them feel they're being coerced by students. We think they're more likely to vote for divestment this way."

Students at six other universities held major protests for divestment, including the occupation of Day Hall at Cornell University that saw 1,031 arrests as *In These Times* went to press. Cornell has a 17-year history of anti-apartheid activism, including last year's student referendum for divestment that won by an overwhelming margin. Last week the students obtained a permit to build a "shantytown" behind the administrative building to remind passers-by of the living conditions for black South Africans. The organizers say that they, too, will try diverse tactics to pressure their board of trustees to divest its \$112 million from South Africa.

This week's contributors: David Davis and Stephanie Fried

By Salim Muwakkil

FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS KAREN Miller has had to climb seven flights of stairs to reach her apartment in Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes, the largest public housing project in the world. In her building, a 16-story block of brick and concrete, the elevator is often broken. But even if it worked she wouldn't use it. "It's totally unsafe, it always smells like a toilet and it's a good place to get ripped off or raped," she explains.

Miller, a 21-year-old single mother of a five-year-old son, has lived in the Taylor Homes for most of her life and has an inexhaustible supply of horror stories. She can talk for hours about confronting Chicago's famed winters without heat, about the plumbing that occasionally deposits raw sewage in her kitchen sink, about the absolute absence of maintenance and police protection.

Miller's tales are typical of those told by most residents of Taylor's other 27 identical buildings. And tenants in the Richard Allen homes in Philadelphia, Newark's Stella Wright complex and dozens of similar housing developments in cities across the country would undoubtedly share their accounts of life in the projects. Together their stories furnish urgent evidence that the 1949 Housing Act's promise to provide a "decent home and suitable living environment for every American family" has been broken and forgotten.

The conditions these tenants must endure simply confirm the truism that the U.S. housing market mirrors its social structure: the poorest get the worst. Residents of these projects are predominately black, female-headed families, and many are receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) money. This is where those statistics on the lowest end of the income spectrum live. And they live crowded in such dense concentrations that it's hard to believe these projects weren't designed specifically to promote misery.

Miller is literally locked into her situation by a fixed income that is under constant threat, a lack of child care services and a bare minimum of marketable skills. She and her demographic cohorts are seldom given major consideration in any policy decisions, but they are being devastated by the Reagan administration's crusade to remove government from the business of low-income housing. The Reagan bunch believes that the quest for profit will best motivate the construction of low-income housing and help fulfill the unkept promise of the 1949 Housing Act. From Reagan's 1980 election until now, his administration has opposed all construction of new federally-funded, low-income housing, and canceled the construction of many new units authorized by previous administrations. And since the private sector has yet to fill the vacuum, the Karen Millers of this country are being squeezed. They are the most tragic victims of the current housing crisis, but they're not the only victims.

The middle class is also being badly shaken by tremors from this crisis, and although politicians have been silent on the issue (except for an occasional mention from Jesse Jackson, housing was a virtual non-issue during last year's presidential campaign), there are signs that it soon will surface into the public consciousness. Some even predict that the housing issue has the potential to forge missing links in a progressive coalition.

"A new generation of middle-class tenants are seeing the 'American Dream' of owning a house slipping away," contends John Atlas, a founder of the National Tenants Union (NTU). "And they will increasingly join the urban poor in a growing renters' rights revolt across the country."

Eight million households, one out of 10, now pay more than half their incomes for housing (the current rule-of-thumb is that 25 percent of income should go to housing). Two-and-a-half million U.S. citizens are displaced or evicted every year. Interest rates, which are double what they were a decade ago, are forcing large numbers of

SHELTER

Spreading crisis threatens housing



Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes is beset with problems faced by similar projects across the country.

middle-class families out of the home-buying market and into renting. Many who managed to become homeowners are also having problems; according to figures compiled by the Mortgage Bankers Association, the number of foreclosures is at a post-war high. Meanwhile, the primary institutions of residential lending—savings and loans and mutual banks—are failing in unprecedented numbers.

"There is little doubt in my mind, and most people in the field agree—we are in the midst of the largest housing crisis since the Depression," notes Chester Hartman, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies and one of the country's leading housing analysts.

"Virtually every federal program to build or rehabilitate housing for low-income households was eliminated in Reagan's first four years," Hartman adds. "His administration also made plans to abandon or sell substantial portions of the existing public housing stock. And they want to increase rents from 25 percent to 30 percent of household income, which will only force families to reallocate money needed for food and other necessities so that the federal government can cut spending."

The Reagan administration's plans to privatize low-income housing turns over even more control to those interests whose unrestrained profit-taking has delivered the industry into its present crisis.

"Limited demand-side subsidies are replacing existing production-oriented subsidies for assisted housing," says a recent study published by the Planners Network, a Washington-based housing research group. "This will ensure that the publicly aided stock will shrink as units are lost through deterioration, demolition and private resale.... At the same time, continued credit stringency and reduced federal involvement in housing finance will diminish housing's share of resources in the economy as a whole."

"These measures, coupled with the impact of continued high unemployment and income maintenance cutbacks on consumer purchasing power, are guaranteed to make the housing crisis even worse, especially for the poor and increasingly for the middle-income households also," the report concludes.

The voucher system currently being pushed by the Reagan administration provides low-income families with vouchers, analogous to Food Stamps for housing, which are used to find housing on the private market. Advocates of this system contend it would help avoid concentrating the poor in housing project "warehouses" by allowing them to choose where they will live.

Hartman argues that the voucher system is misguided as well as inadequate. "There are too many reasons why the voucher sys-

tem won't work," he explains. "The system assumes there's a substantial amount of vacant housing that is reasonably priced and available, and that's just not the case. There are very few moderately priced vacancies in decent condition. The allowances won't be enough, and there'll be a great temptation for landlords to discriminate against the most needy tenants. What's more, these allowances, or vouchers, offer no assistance whatever to elderly and other homeowners who can't pay mortgages."

The housing crisis is a result of long-term practices and, in Hartman's opinion, can't be solved just with variations on old themes. Solutions require a fundamental shift in the way we in this country regard real estate. "The problem that arises because of the increasing gap between what housing costs and what people can afford is forcing consideration of solutions that are outside traditional approaches."

The housing affordability problem is caused by the inherent conflict between two basic institutions: the labor market and the housing market. Most people work for wages and despite recent increases in per capita income, the pressure is always on employers to hold costs down to better compete and maximize profits. The labor market therefore is exerting a downward pressure on wages.

The cost of housing is determined by the interaction of real estate developers, builders, materials producers, mortgage lenders, investors, speculators, landlords and homeowners. This necessity of life is considered a speculative commodity and everyone seeks optimum profits. Thus, the housing market exerts an upward pressure on costs. The costs of housing bear no direct relationship to workers' incomes, but since housing is a necessity that most people depend on others to supply, the housing market also exerts an upward pressure on wages.

The conflict between income and housing costs was camouflaged by an economy that boomed following World War II. With healthy economic conditions providing room to increase living standards and sustain business growth, improvement in the nation's housing was possible. Yet the seeds of destruction were planted by the system's enormous reliance on credit financing. Debt, which is so essential to the real estate system, places a heavy burden on the future. Between 1946 and 1965, residential mortgage debt grew about three times as fast as the GNP and disposable personal income.

The U.S. is just leveling off from an unprecedented 30-year sweep of housing achievement. In just three decades, homeownership increased from about 40 percent in 1950 to nearly 66 percent in 1983, and almost 40 million units were constructed. Census Bureau figures note that between 1950 and 1970, the proportion of standard housing in the U.S. declined from

more than 40 percent to 9 percent.

When President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Housing Act of 1937, he described this country as "a nation, one-third ill-housed." And, although the 1937 legislation was intended more as a public works program to help a gasping construction industry recover from the Depression than as an attempt to provide quality housing for the needy, the bill was a signal that the government would eventually expand its commitment to housing.

"After World War II, the pent-up need for housing, coupled with war-induced prosperity and the increased productive capacity of the economy, stimulated a huge housing construction boom," reads the aforementioned Planners Network study. "With expanded federal mortgage insurance and tax incentives for homeownership, the suburb and single-family tract house became the vehicle for this explosive growth, supported by the development of federally assisted infrastructure and highways."

While the poor's needs were sometimes included in the rhetoric promoting the great post-war housing boom, the bulk of the activity (the below-market interest rate mortgages, the government guarantees, the state housing finance agencies and all the rest) was basically oriented to the needs of the emerging middle class. But the interest of the poor and other housing consumers coincided and allowed a powerful housing alliance to develop. The housing boom continued, with short periods of stagnation, until the late '70s. In fact, that decade was the most prolific housing period ever, including record production levels of owner-occupied single-family units.

But as the nation shifted from a nation of renters to one of homeowners, the broad-based housing constituency of the post-war years dissolved. Somewhere along the line "government housing" became identified with the poor, and suburban homeowners no longer shared their concerns; neither did lending institutions or homebuilders. These groups were no longer concerned with housing as shelter, but with housing as an investment, as a form of protection from inflation and as a tax refuge.

In 1973 President Richard Nixon imposed a moratorium on federally subsidized homeownership and rental assistance programs. The fact that he succeeded confirmed that the old housing alliance was a thing of the past. The next major legislation to deal with housing in the public sector was the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act. A significant part of that act was the Section 8 program, which granted subsidies to developers, rehabilitators and landlords to make up the difference between the cost of providing decent housing on the private market and what tenants could afford. Most analysts now conclude that the open-ended subsidies of the Section 8 program were an invitation to excess.

Publicly owned housing accounts for a little more than 1.3 million units out of a total housing inventory of 88 million dwelling units. About four million low- and moderate-income households receive some form of federal housing aid. The numbers are relatively small, but those affected are disproportionately vulnerable. The move to extract the government from the position of housing provider is making life perilous for them.

Meanwhile, a showdown in the economy has brought the chickens of debt financing home to roost in the private housing market. "During the '50s, about two-thirds of all families could have afforded the typical new house; by 1970, one-fourth, and by 1981, the figure is less than one-tenth," explains Hartman.

Changes are also afoot in the land of financial institutions. "The end is at hand for the sheltered housing finance industry of specialized lending institutions for housing predicated on long-term fixed low-interest mortgages," writes George Sternlieb, Rutgers professor and director of the Center for Urban Policy Research, in a recent essay published in the *Annals of the American Academy*. "It was this element in concert

Continued on page 15

By William Gasperini

TEGUCIGALPA

HONDURAS' POLITICAL CRISIS deepened in mid-April after President Suazo Cordova vetoed a crucial electoral reform law. The action came after the president had clashed head on with his chief political rival, National Congress President Efraín Bu Giron, over rules regarding the selection of presidential candidates for November's election.

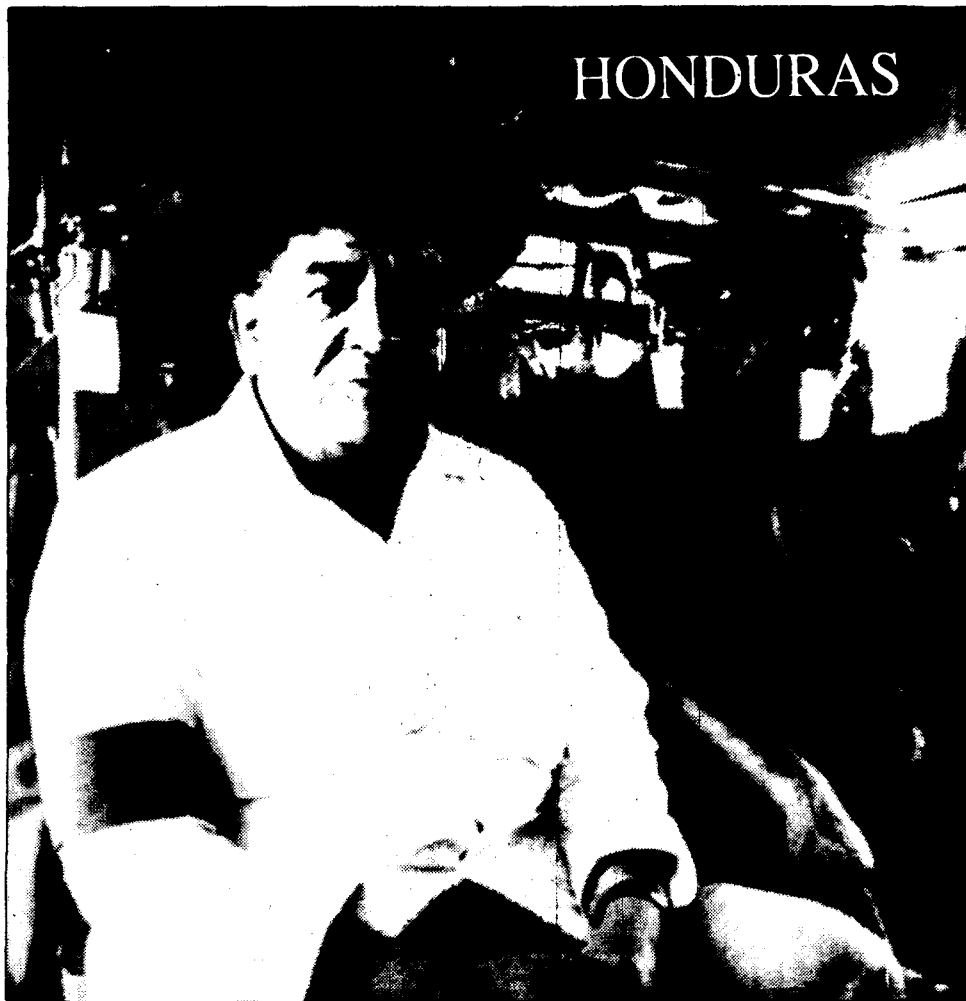
At the heart of the issue lies Suazo's ability to oversee who will be the ruling Liberal Party's candidate for president. The electoral law was to establish primary elections within political parties, favored by Bu Giron, who is a presidential candidate. Suazo said such primaries were unnecessary as delegates to party conventions have already been selected. But many Hondurans say Suazo wants to retain control over the presidency and the country's political future.

"Suazo is a mini-Napoleon," said one man in Tegucigalpa. "He wants to choose his own successor. The only fair solution would be for party members to vote their choice of a candidate, but he won't have it that way."

All around him red-and-white banners fluttered in the breeze with portraits of Bu Giron and Jose Azcona, "selected" as pre-candidates unofficially by one faction of the Liberal Party. Simultaneously, President Suazo's wing of the party held their own convention in another city to nominate the "officialista" candidate, former Interior Minister Oscar Mejia Arellano. Each convention questioned the other's legality.

"Arellano is a Suazo puppet," said a former secretary of the party. "The people don't want him; they said so in different marches and demonstrations. As usual, the politicians fight and the people are left out." No candidate will be official until a later convention is held.

Ironically, President Suazo is also in a position to influence the rival National



Honduran President Suazo Cordova vetoed a crucial electoral reform law in mid-April.

President's recent actions deepen political crisis

Party's candidate selection, since close associates control a powerful wing of that party. The Nationalists met several months ago to select their pre-candidate, but another wing of the party contested the choice.

The Liberal Party dispute erupted in public in late March when Congress President

Bu Giron enlisted supporters from both major parties and two other tiny parties in an attempt to break Suazo's control over the Supreme Court, which has jurisdiction in political matters, and an election tribunal that oversees rules. A majority of Assembly delegates "impeached" five pro-Suazo Supreme Court justices by using a little-known clause in the constitution and replaced them with other justices, including Ramon Valladares Soto, Bu Giron's law partner.

Suazo responded angrily by jailing Valladares Soto under charges of treason; he remains in detention. The other replacements named by the Congress went into hiding as army troops guarded the Supreme Court building in Tegucigalpa.

While the president claims support from the armed forces, the military's role to date has been to stay out of the dispute. Armed Forces Chief General Walter Lopez told *In These Times* that the military is aware the situation poses a threat to the country's fragile political system, but he denied rumors of a possible coup.

"We are the institution in charge of maintaining order and security for the Honduran people," he said. "We respect the Constitution. A coup would be in no one's interest in Honduras, as we have larger interests to attend to." Those interests, the general said, include Honduras' pivotal role in what he called the "convulsed" Central American region.

"This year will be definitive not just because of our elections but also what is occurring throughout Central America. We in Honduras need to maintain our internal

peace, as it would do no good to have strong armed forces and military equipment without that peace," Lopez said.

For their part, U.S. officials in Tegucigalpa maintained distance from the political fracas, saying only that they hoped the political forces would resolve the situation and preserve the democratic process initiated with Suazo's election in 1982. His election ended 17 years of military rule.

As the political crisis erupted in late March, the latest in a series of military maneuvers was underway in the country, involving hundreds of U.S. and Honduran forces. "Ahuas-Tara III" began in mid-February and will last until May. One phase of the maneuvers, called the "Scorpion" exercises, included 550 Texas National Guardsmen driving scores of M-60 tanks in a mock invasion of Honduras less than five miles from the Nicaraguan border.

As dozens of high-ranking military and diplomatic officials watched, the tanks roared across a wide plain under cover of smoke bombs and ear-shattering overflights by Honduran Air Force A-37s "bombing" the "invading" tanks. A South African military attaché, the chief of Panama's armed forces and military officials from Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Venezuela were among the guests sitting atop a hill under a large tent. In the distance, they could see low mountains in Nicaragua, where one official said troop and tank movement had been seen earlier in the week. A Honduran officer explaining the exercises on a large chart made no secret to whom the maneuvers were directed.

"We are here to demonstrate our capacity in light of the grave threat posed to our region by the Marxist-Leninist government of Nicaragua," he said. A U.S. official later said the exercises were not intended to intimidate anyone, but rather to show U.S. resolve in a region considered in its strategic interests.

"Our purpose in these exercises is to train Hondurans as to how to respond in the event of an incursion from Nicaragua," said U.S. Army spokesman Lt. Col. Agustin Gomez. "We chose the site as the most likely for the incursion to occur, and help them prepare for a response."

Gomez claimed that the tank phase of Ahuas-Tara III was crucial in the training because Nicaragua possesses heavy-gauge Soviet tanks and other armored vehicles. Asked for a scenario of a possible invasion, he said detailed information was classified, but that analysts believe the Sandinistas do not have the "individual flexibility" of Honduran/U.S. field commanders who could adapt to a developing battle as they saw fit. "The Nicaraguans are taught to follow orders from the top, and would probably not alter their routes if necessary," he said. At the same time, he and other officials admitted an incursion was unlikely.

Gomez also discounted any possibility of error during the exercises that could result in a response from the Nicaraguans. "Everything was out in the open; we hid nothing from anyone about the exercises being purely for training purposes. In fact, we invited Nicaragua to send observers, but they turned down the offer."

The Nicaraguan press paid ample attention to the tank phase of the maneuvers, calling them "provocative" and a further escalation of President Reagan's "bellicose" policy toward Central America.

Officials said the Texas National Guardsmen were selected for the exercises because they are well-trained in the use of tanks. Another factor, according to other observers, was that most of the guardsmen are of Hispanic descent, which facilitated communications with the Hondurans. Air Force pilots and other support personnel were also present.

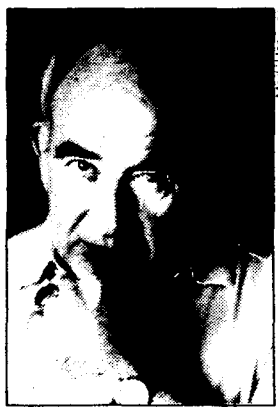
Soldiers interviewed said they saw the need to be in Honduras, but some doubted the reasons given by higher officials. "I don't think the people here really want to fight anyone," said one U.S. soldier. "I think most would rather it all ended. I wish everyone would get along so we could go home."

William Gasperini writes regularly from Central America.

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PERU

Sweeping left victory portends little change

By Gregory Heires and Larry Rich

LIMA, PERU

WITH HIS VICTORY IN PERU'S general election on April 14, Alan Garcia, 35, is practically assured of becoming the youngest president in Latin America. He is expected to win decisively in the runoff election in June.

Despite a call to boycott the elections by Peru's extremist armed guerrilla movement *Sendero Luminoso*, or Shining Path, and a rash of bombings by them the night before, election day passed without major incident. With 48 percent of the vote going to Garcia's Peruvian Aprista Party (APRA) and with 22 percent going to the United Left Coalition (IU), the Peruvian electorate handed a resounding defeat to the ruling elite, represented by the Popular Action Party (AP) and the Democratic Coalition (CODE). Having been prevented from taking office before, APRA is expected to assume the presidency on July 28.

Meanwhile, the left has become the second most powerful congressional force in the country. Its new political panorama has generated hope for the majority of Peruvians, who have experienced dramatic deterioration of already sub-human living conditions under the government of AP President Fernando Belaunde. But APRA's peculiar nature and the gravity of the economic crisis suggests that there will be no significant changes in Peru within the next five years.

The big loser was Javier Alva, the AP presidential candidate, who by obtaining just over 5 percent of the vote, barely managed to garner enough support for AP to remain a legally registered party. The AP, a conglomeration of right-wing professional business interests, was founded three decades ago by President Belaunde around the nebulous concept of "Peru as Doctrine," which supposedly sought inspiration for its public works projects in the Inca Empire.

Under the Belaunde administration, Peruvians have lived through what former AP Finance Minister Manuel Ulloa once described as "the worst economic crisis of the century." More than 60 percent of the national budget has gone to foreign debt payments and military spending, leaving

little for state investment. National industry has been crippled as the economy has been opened up to foreign competition. Between 1980 and 1984, Peruvians' purchasing power plummeted by 30 percent, while the number of full-time workers dropped from 41.8 percent to 31.7 percent of the labor force. This has meant that today's minimum salary stretches only far enough to purchase 60 percent of the basic family market basket. Forced to defend this track record, AP presidential candidate Alva leveled a lackluster campaign that ended in the party's worst electoral debacle ever.

To the right of AP, the recently formed Democratic Coalition ran Luis Bedoya, a former mayor of Lima, as its presidential candidate. The CODE is dominated by Bedoya's Popular Christian Party (PPC), a mix of small financiers, industrialists and exporters, some of whose family fortunes were amassed through years of cooperation with foreign mining and transnational business interests. What AP lacked in grassroots support the PPC tried to make up for in campaign spending, which is estimated at \$2.2 million.

Yet despite its heavy campaign spending, the party was unable to change its ruling-class image. Two weeks before campaigning ended, in the high plains city of Tuno an inebriated physician yelled "fat cat" at Bedoya during a motorcade and the candidate proceeded to slug the man and knee him in the groin. Coming in third in the elections with 17 percent of the vote, the PPC received most of its support from the middle and upper classes in Lima.

Historic opportunity.

If the elections represent a low point for the right, they provide an historic opportunity for the left. The IU Front—made up of eight parties ranging from Marxists Leninists to Social Democrats—is now a clearly recognized political force in the country. IU candidate Lima mayor Alfonso Barrantes will run against Garcia in the June run-offs. This is no small accomplishment for the left, which five years ago was so divided that it ran five competing presidential candidates following the collapse of a previous effort at a united front.

IU's platform—which a team of several hundred economists, sociologists and other advisors developed over two years—calls

for a five-year moratorium on the foreign debt, nationalization of Southern Peru copper corporations and a redistribution of wealth. (The latest available statistics from 1973 indicate that the top 1 percent of the population receives 33 percent of the national income, while the bottom 30 percent of the population receives 5 percent of the national income.) The ability of the IU to carry out the plan, however, is doubtful. Some months ago one of the platform's architects reportedly said an IU victory would be a "disaster."

This pessimism comes from a recognition of the still fragile nature of left unity. Ideological differences could yet tear the front apart. Barrantes has publicly attacked members from parties in the coalition who have urged him to step up the pace and radicalize his gradual road to socialism.

In a country made up of mainly native and *mestizo* mixed blood peoples, there is doubt about how close the IU leadership is to the working class since IU's record of organizing at the grassroots is mixed. Also, many key leaders are white.

Nevertheless, the Peruvian left is still stronger and more united than it has ever been. Four days before the elections, Barrantes spoke before some 300,000 people in Lima, the biggest rally the left has ever held.

APRA's victory marked a watershed in the history of Peru. Though the country's oldest party, APRA has never held the presidency. Founded by Victor Raul Haya de la Torre in 1928, he originally conceived it as an "anti-imperialist" and multi-class party.

While 55 years have passed since the party was formed, it is still difficult to pinpoint APRA's ideology and ultimate program. One Peru watcher described APRA as "a social democratic party that has succumbed to opportunism." And the party's track record certainly raises questions about where its interests lie.

In 1931 the U.S. ambassador in Peru wired Washington this message: "I am able to believe that if [Haya] should become president of Peru we would have nothing to fear." And when Haya endorsed José Luis Bustamante y Rivero in the 1945 presidential election, he spoke of "inter-Americanism" rather than "anti-imperialism." Shedding his past rhetoric about social justice and reform, Haya said, "It is not necessary to take wealth from those who have it but to create it for those who don't."

Although APRA's past has its dark sides, the party maintains its widespread appeal. Imelda Vegas Centano, a sociologist who just completed a major study on APRA, says that some of its attraction is based on the party's ability to convey hope in a poor country where basic human needs have been historically denied to the vast majority. While interviewing APRA Party milit-

APRA Party's Alan Garcia, 35, is practically assured of becoming the youngest president in Latin America.

ants, she found that most of them believe that the APRA vision involves a "paradise on earth. She argues that the myth has gained credibility because APRA has "lived through more persecution than any other party, including *Sendero Luminoso*."

Undeniably, APRA's history is full of numerous instances of injustices and repressions against the party. In 1931 APRA claimed it lost the elections because of fraud. In 1962 a military coup prevented it from assuming the presidency even though Haya had squeezed by Belaunde in the presidential elections. Between 1931 and 1962 the APRA was forced underground and many militants were persecuted. And another event looms large in the popular consciousness: in 1932 popular militants took over the northern city of Trujillo for two days, killing some 60 army officers. When the army retook the city, it retaliated by gathering up some 1,000 APRA Party members and took them to the pre-Inca ruins of Chan Chan on the outskirts of town, where they were massacred.

During this year's election Garcia constantly emphasized APRA's past and paid homage to Haya in his campaign speeches, which were characterized by a populist rhetoric and nationalistic fervor. Although he did not address specifics of a program, Garcia offered a new vision. One U.S. citizen living in Lima compared Garcia's image to that of John F. Kennedy. In his main campaign slogan Garcia proclaimed that "my commitment is to all Peruvians."

No coup likely.

Whoever moves into the presidential palace will doubtlessly carry the memory of how many previous occupants have been evicted by the armed forces. Peru has been ruled by military regimes for 30 of the last 54 years. Even so, a military coup is unlikely at this point since most of the armed forces reportedly have no desire to seize or oversee such a disastrous economic and political situation—nor do they have a plan of how to surmount the current crisis. In recent statements in the Spanish daily *El Pais* and the Peruvian journal *Que hacer*, Gen. Julian Julia, the minister of war, confirmed the military's support for the constitution, adding that their major concern is the stability of the country.

In the final analysis, however, the military remains a question mark. Many believe, for instance, that Belaunde's inaction in the face of widespread human rights abuses in the remote emergency zone of Ayacucho is partially based on a fear of being once again removed from the presidential palace in the middle of the night by the army.

After the new president takes office in July, International human rights organizations will undoubtedly keep a close watch on Peru. Some 5,000 people have died in political violence since 1980 when *Sendero Luminoso* began its "protracted people's war from the countryside to the city."

A week before the vote, a group of international human rights organizations called upon the candidates to speak out on human rights. During the campaign the issue had been glossed over by the major contenders. Officially, IU called for the establishment of a regional government in the emergency zone and withdrawal of the armed forces, though Barrantes' public statements sometimes seem similar to those of Belaunde, who has spoken of military "excesses" to deny that systematic violations are occurring in the emergency zones. In APRA's case, observers speculate that the bloodbath in Ayacucho would continue.

No matter who is elected in June, the new administration, only three days after taking office, will have to fork out \$1.5 billion in interest due on the country's foreign debt of about \$14 billion. In an extremely poor country boiling over with political tensions, the next few years will tell if APRA will bear out the myth and fulfill the dreams of the party's supporters. ■

Gregory Heires and Larry Rich report regularly from Peru.

SAN FRANCISCO

By Joan Walsh

THE SKY ABOVE CIVIC CENTER Plaza was a little ominous April 20, with a drizzle threatening to become a downpour on the 50,000 people gathered there for the Spring Mobilization for Peace, Jobs and Justice. But rally organizers checking the weather all afternoon saw more than rain clouds in the sky to annoy them. A small plane ringed the plaza repeatedly, trailing a banner pronouncing, "We want Israel out of Lebanon now," the issue that had threatened to split the broad coalition brought together for the mobilization.

The day proved that even the tightest political organization can't control the weather, or the fractious left. But the Bay Area Spring Mobilization was an organizational marvel nonetheless, drawing the biggest crowd in the country and pulling together a coalition that has to be the envy of left movements nationally.

It didn't start out that way. When planning began last year two separate coalitions sprang up at odds with each other. One was mainly Third World solidarity groups, the remnants of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, religious pacifist organizations and the white "organized left," who wanted the mobilization to tackle broader issues than on the national agenda (see accompanying story). Beyond calls for no intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, they wanted the group on record supporting the Salvadoran rebels and Nicaragua's Sandinistas. Most troublesome was the issue of the Mideast—even in the left coalition there was some division over whether to merely oppose U.S. intervention there or advance a tougher anti-Israel stance.

The other coalition was dominated by labor unions and the nuclear freeze movement, which endorsed the mobilization at last December's national conference. Unions and freeze supporters wanted to keep the focus on the four proposed demands. Already the anti-intervention and freeze stands put unions to the left of the AFL-CIO leadership, and freeze leaders worried about muddying the movement's single-issue clarity with foreign policy and domestic demands.

Despite those rather dramatic differences, many in the two coalitions realized the public relations dilemma of rival mobilizations on the same day, and began the process of negotiating to come together. If the left coalition scorned the labor-dominated coalition's political timidity, it had to admire its potential breadth. In an unscientific test of their relative political strength, at last July's Democratic Convention a labor demonstration drew more than 100,000 people, while a left-wing Vote Peace '84 rally attracted 20,000. Most people agreed that another small rally of the already committed fringe would be politically futile.

So the two coalitions nominally merged. Berkeley Mayor Gus Newport, prominent in the left coalition, became one of four co-chairs, joining San Francisco Nuclear Weapons Freeze chair Charlene Tschirhart, International Longshoremen Worker's Union leader Al Lannon and Judy Cannon of the Sisters of Mercy. But conflicts persisted. In one compromise, exiled Salvadoran Feliz Kury, a Bay Area representative of the rebel FDR/FMLN, was invited to speak, but only as a trade unionist—he couldn't mention his rebel affiliation. And up until the day of the rally, Newport was pushing to include a Sandinista spokesperson on the program.

Newport wound up less than pleased with the coalition's compromise. "The timing was right, but no movement as safe as this one has ever succeeded," Newport said.

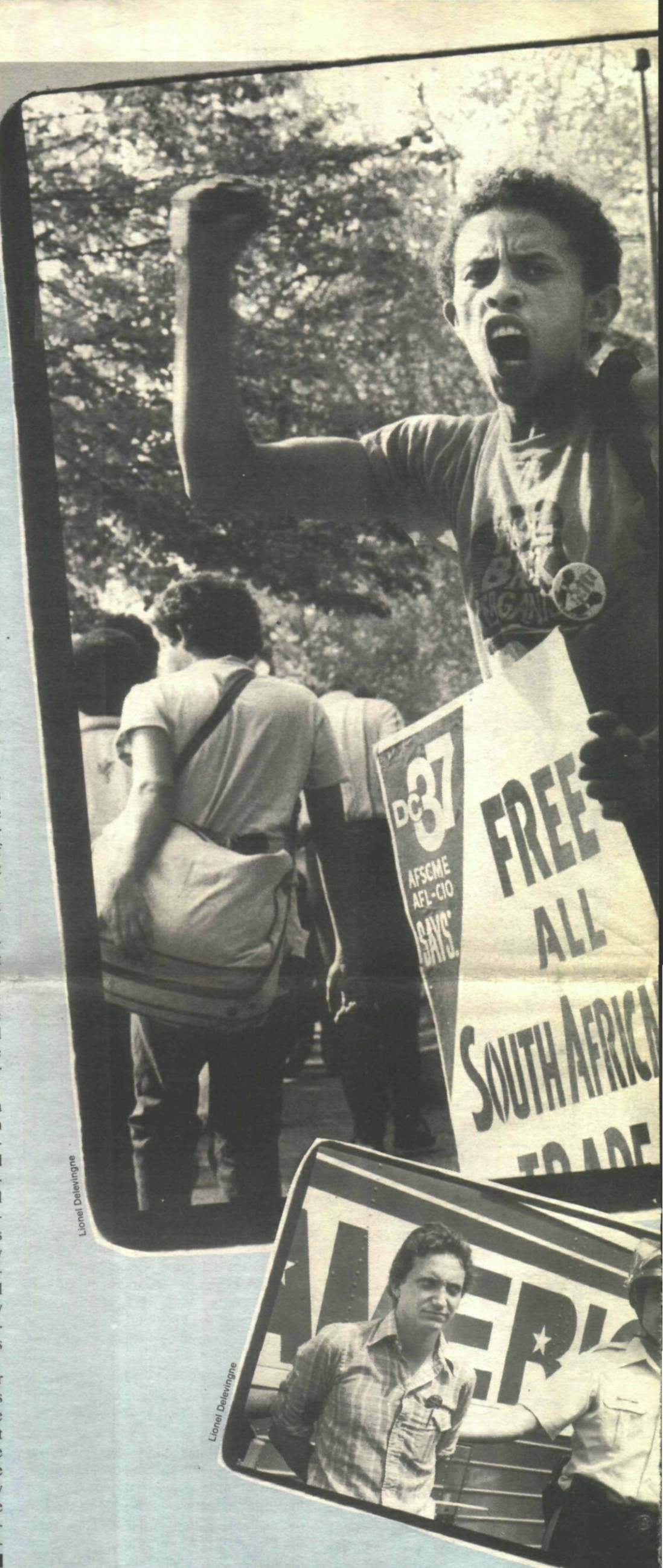
Kury was more sanguine. He wouldn't comment on the organizing conflicts, but his fiery speech called for "freedom, justice and revolution." And he noted afterward: "The message I brought here was the message of the opposition in El Salvador."

Tom Rankin of the California Labor Federation praised Kury's participation and his speech, but had criticism for others on the coalition's left. "We organized around four demands, positions that were to the left of labor leadership, even the freeze. And a lot of people wouldn't stick to those demands. We fought to keep to them, and I think there was some bad faith, too."

Yet he labeled the mobilization a success. "We pulled together a coalition that hasn't been together since the civil rights movement," Rankin noted. Coalition architect Matthew Hallinan agreed. "What we did was form a center coalition first, and then bring the left in. It usually works the other way—the left tries to bring the center in and usually fails. This really is a model."

The Bay Area mobilization does seem a model organizing success. It also drew on activism around the successful anti-apartheid sit-in at Berkeley, now in its third week. Most speakers talked about the students keeping vigil on the steps of Sproul Hall (renamed Steven Biko hall), demanding that the regents divest the university's South African holdings. And the Berkeley action drew from the mobilization—its organizers used the opportunity to marshal support for the sit-in, including pledges by politicians and community leaders to present themselves for arrest when the protests heat up at the close of the semester.

A reporter who thrust a tape recorder into Mario Savio's face and asked, "So is this the '60s again or what?" expressed the confusion of most of the media, which can't quite explain the sudden surge of active protest in these quiescent times. What the Bay Area mobilization and the Berkeley protests have borrowed from the '60s are its lessons: that movements have to be inclusive and at least start out trying to involve the broadest possible base. ■



Lionel Delvingne

Lionel Delvingne

WASHINGTON

Anna Gyorgy

ORGANIZERS OF THE EVENTS held here April 19-22 were surprised at their success. The actions proved timely and creative, attracting thousands of people from across the country. The events stressed the connections between the arms race, intervention in Central America and U.S. support for apartheid in South Africa and the domestic needs for

jobs and social justice.

Although the April actions were discussed and decided upon last fall, concrete support came later. National groups that signed on as sponsors had not committed the necessary funds and personnel as late as March 1. But the Washington action came together because of organizing by staffers, who worked for weeks without pay, and by a core group from CISPES, the freeze campaign, SANE, Clergy and Laity Concerned and the War Resister's

League.

Labor support was uneven. The Machinists, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the Electrical Workers (UE), the Steelworkers and District 1199 of the Hospital Workers all endorsed the actions, gave some financial assistance and sent members to participate in the events. "This is where we belong," UFCW Secretary-General Anthony Luddy told the demonstrators at the rally on Saturday, April 20. "Our members also want peace, justice, jobs." But Gene Carroll, labor coordinator for the freeze and a fundraiser for the April actions, said he was "frankly disappointed that some national unions chose not to endorse the rally." He also said that some leaders, still reeling

from Walter Mondale's defeat, "don't see the need for new allies."

But in general the actions, which were sponsored by more than 80 organizations, drew broad support, cutting across color and age lines. One factor contributing to the actions' wide appeal was that organizers chose to connect several themes instead of concentrating on a single issue.

The actions began the afternoon of Friday, April 19, as 800 demonstrators swelled the picket line that has been held in front of the South African Embassy every weekend since Thanksgiving. Only six were arrested at the embassy. According to Free South Africa steering committee member Roger Wilkins, organizers decided to limit the number of demonstrators risking

APRIL

ACTIONS

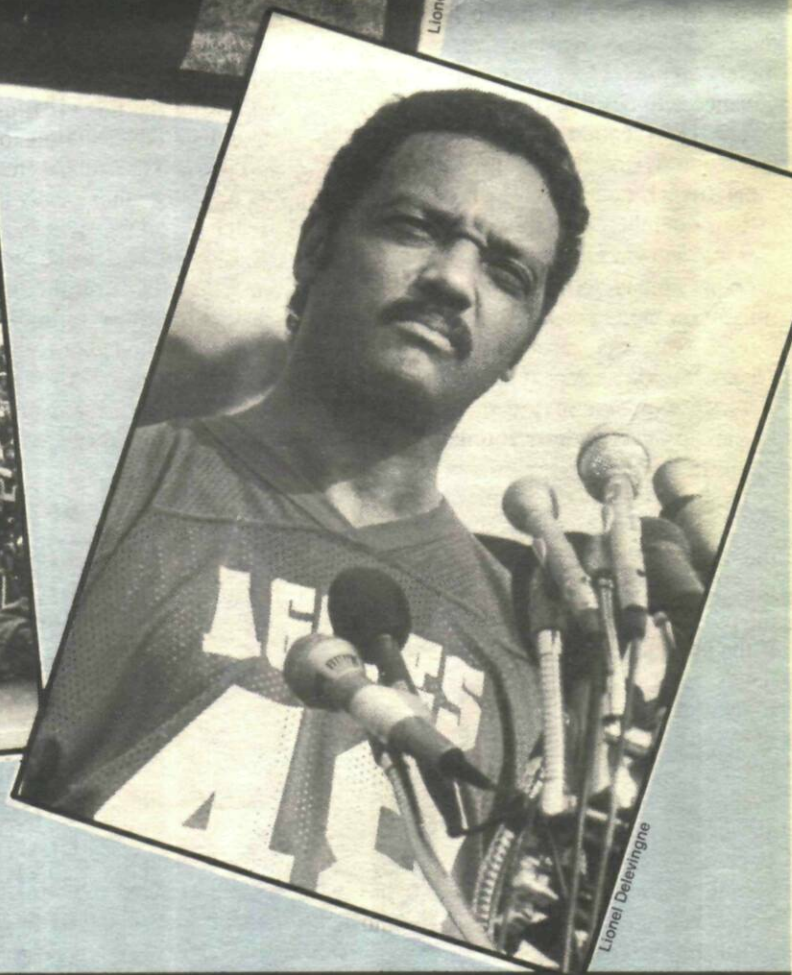


Lionel Delvingne



Robbin Leeds

Above, Mario Savio addresses the crowd of 50,000 in San Francisco. The other photos are from the actions in Washington, D.C., including Rev. Jesse Jackson on the right.



Lionel Delvingne

arrest because of police reports of possible violent disruptions. Although there were rumors of potential confrontations throughout the four days, all the activities went off as planned, without disruption or violence.

Park police estimated the Saturday afternoon rally crowd at 26,000. Organizers estimated that about 75,000 participated in all of the Saturday events. On the West coast, 50,000 gathered in San Francisco (see accompanying story), and coalition demonstrations in Los Angeles, Seattle and Houston boosted the weekend total to more than 150,000.

Rep. John Conyers, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, said the Saturday rally was the most important event he had attended in years. Rev. Jesse

Jackson's keynote speech was well received. Cataloguing the Reagan administration's injustices, he called for jobs, peace and justice, and announced that he will travel to West Germany the week of May 8 "to recall the horrors of facism in 1945, making a moral appeal for support to end its most profound expression in South Africa in 1985." Echoing the outrage about Reagan's recent bungling, he added, "We will not be diverted by tributes at Bitberg, when the task of the day is to free Johannesburg."

On Monday morning, 320 people were arrested for blocking three White House gates and lying down on Pennsylvania Avenue in a carefully planned civil disobedience action. Park police slowly arrested

people throughout the day, and kept many waiting for hours in buses. Most of those arrested were issued misdemeanor citations; they could either pay \$50 or arrange for a court date. Lawyers for the April actions anticipate follow-up legal action.

In a complementary action across the city, 1,000 citizen lobbyists from 35 states took to the halls of Congress. Earlier they had a full Sunday schedule of seminars covering lobbying techniques and the latest factual information on the four areas of concern. Forty Nebraskans came to relate military spending to current problems in rural America; 200 Floridians made the journey to speak with their Congress members; and many lobbyists brought proxies from people back home in support of the com-

prehensive freeze bill. New York freeze advocates brought 1,500 such proxies to Sen. Patrick Moynihan, and nearly that number to Sen. Alfonso D'Amato. In all, 159 congressional offices were reached by the citizen effort.

The high turnout and spirit in Washington was a boost to those peace and civil rights activists trying to make the necessary connections between military spending and domestic issues. If the four days of activities are any indication, it seems clear that people will respond to a coalition call that offers the opportunity to work across single-issue, racial and class lines.

■ **Anna Gyorgy** was a national staffer on environmental issues for the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign.

LETTERS

In These Times is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

Social insecurity

SALIM MUWAKKIL'S ARTICLE "SOCIAL Insecurity" (ITT, April 10) is simply a rehash of the material we've seen for years in the commercial media: woe is Social Security, especially for the baby boom generation. Every cliché of the media campaign begun 10 years ago to discredit Social Security, mounted by the great corporations weary of the burden of Social Security taxes, is repeated.

There is the theme that the proportion of productive workers to pension recipients is lowering. By the year 2015, when the baby-boomers hit the retirement rolls, this argument goes, the system may fail because there will be fewer than two productive workers per recipient.

Muwakkil's figures are worse than those usually quoted without realization that such figures are merely projections. One percentage point difference in population age groups can throw them off. But the important ratio is that of productive workers to the entire dependent population, composed, always, of three groups: children, the disabled and the elderly, a ratio that remains unchanged decade after decade.

In the '50s, for example, the baby boom children were the main component; their cost of upkeep, in the form of schools, etc., was probably a greater burden on taxes and family income than will be the case when they hit retirement age in 2015.

Today in several European countries the ratio of elderly to productive workers approaches that predicted for the U.S. in 2015, yet their systems work well. In fact, the age of retirement is usually lower than here.

In considering Social Security payroll taxes, Muwakkil mentions some remedies being considered, but fails entirely to mention general tax revenues as a prime possible source. He seems unaware that such revenues serve as a back-up to Social Security income for the system's fluctuations in every industrial country, (except

South Africa and the U.S.).

Raising the retirement age is mentioned as a solution being seriously considered, but the fact that the U.S. already has one of the highest retirement ages is not. Japan, Italy and the Soviet Union for many years have set retirement ages at 55 for women and 60 for men.

And who advocates a later retirement age, and for what reasons? *Forbes* magazine, for one, put it bluntly (February 1980): a raise to age 68 "would hold down payments, since many elderly would die without collecting benefits, and those who live will collect less while paying taxes longer."

Gregory Bergman
Berkeley, Calif.

No-jobs economy

THE SOCIAL SECURITY SCENE LOOKS somber only so long as we discuss the issues in terms of budgets and deficits (ITT, April 10). For the bottom line on Social Security is not the price-tag—not a matter of available funds—but simply the clash of social values.

Martin Feldstein, Reagan's former chief economic advisor, gave the game away when he remarked: "As long as the voters support the Social Security system it will be able to pay all the benefits it promises." Voter support is hardly a financial matter, it is political.

Here is the point of Reagan's basic strategy: to erode that support by undermining public confidence in the system's financial stability. But to treat Social Security outlays as though they represent slices stolen from the national income pie is nothing more than verbal sleight of hand.

Even if we insist on talking deficits, why not focus on the income side of the ledger, at those billions in corporate tax monies siphoned out of the Treasury pipeline by Reagan's own largesse?

As for those warnings of Trust Fund depletion up ahead, crying "wolf" about

that impending collapse goes back a long way. The crystal ball act began when Social Security was being debated in 1934 and Rep. John Tabor (R-NY) rose up and thundered: "Never in the history of the world has any measure been so insidiously designed to...prevent any possibility of employers ever providing work again."

Jumping to 1967, we find the *Wall Street Journal* predicting, "Social Security will be unable to deliver its promised benefits by 1972 or 1973." In 1970, *Time* upped the target date for disaster to 1976; but when still no bankruptcy intervened, the American Enterprise Institute moved Social Security doomsday up to 1980. Then, in 1981, *Forbes* warned as solemnly as before that benefits would no longer be payable by 1986 at the outside. But with 1986 now too close for comfort, Reagan's tame economists tell us bankruptcy is inevitable anytime between 1990 and 2020—unless our selfish seniors let Washington shave benefits very close to the bone.

There are some real problems, but all can be easily enough contained given the will. Any deficit in a given year because of falling FICA receipts can easily be covered out of the general revenues, as was recommended by a congressional committee in 1977. Failure to act on this was clearly a political decision, not a financial one. We would face no financial difficulties whatever, if Washington finally paid its share of the load.

In any case, why not factor in the impact of the cybernetic revolution? As robots and computers crowd workers out of factories and offices; as creeping unemployment becomes a permanent feature of the new no-jobs economy looming ahead, every country will need more social distribution, not less.

Cradle-to-grave insurance will be one step toward filling that need until a new mentality divorcing income from work takes hold. For the first time in history, we are reaching a point where Marx's "to each according to his needs" becomes technologically possible; where, with endless automated production, all goods become literally price-less.

Arthur Mitchell
New York

Chicano leader

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE EXCEPTION WITH your article "Hispanic Leadership in Trouble" (ITT, Feb. 27).

First, why would you get a fellow in a research capacity to write an article like this? Cecilio Morales seems out of touch with the community, doesn't seem to be Chicano. I wonder if you display the same lack of courtesy with Black writers? Aren't there native Chicanos or Puerto Ricans in their areas who can give class analysis?

Second, it is misleading to state that Rep. Ed Roybal is our community's leader. Roybal, like many of his constituents, has a felony conviction for accepting bribes for the South Koreans. (Perhaps this explains his silence on the human rights abuses in South Korea.) He also was one of the most silent congresspersons during the Vietnam War. This, despite the fact that Chicano casualties were way out of proportion to their national population.

Third, many immigration experts don't realize that unless the economy of Mexico changes (hopefully to a socialist one), the problems of immigration will remain.

Fourth, on the issue of Central America, there have been attempts to link up the struggle in El Salvador with that of the Chicano community. In Los Angeles for example, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) was asked to recognize the struggle of the Chicano people but they refused. Perhaps this is why their support in East L.A. is so poor. During the Vietnam conflict, the left neglected the struggles of the Chicano people until late in the war. The Chicano Moratorium (a series of demonstrations against the war) was a reaction to this

neglect. Now the same thing is happening. The left will glamorize soldiers sloshing through the mud in Central America, the FLMN and the Sandinistas. But leafletting in East L.A. is not so glamorous.

Eugene Hernandez
Sepulveda, Calif.

Arab

WHEN ONE CONSIDERS RATIONALLY THE basis for the Merriam-Webster dictionary's definition of Arab as "vagabond," or "tramp," one must conclude that it is the ultimate in racial bigotry and stereotyping (Perspectives, April 3-9).

Somehow the learned Merriam-Webster lexicographers allowed the stereotype of the desert bedouin to overcome objective facts. In actuality there are more Arab-speaking people who have lived longer in ancient urban places than any ethnic population in the world.

A few of the ancient urban places that come to mind are Damascus, Amann, Baghdad, Byblos, Beirut, Tyre, Sidon, Cairo and Mecca. And this leaves out many North African cities. Some of those cited trace their lineage back 7,000 years, with a history dating back to the Canaanites and Phoenicians.

If the Merriam-Webster continues grossly to defame all Arabic-speakers, will it next define all Americans as cow-boys?

Mitchell Kaidy
Rochester, NY

Jugs of Vodka

I CONSIDER "WHAT KIND OF THREAT DO the Soviets pose?" (ITT, April 10) to be one of the best things I've read on the subject.

I'm not sympathetic with the Soviet social structure; neither do I believe they have ever recanted the position that a struggle must be fought to communize the world. But for decades now this nation has bound itself into a travesty of hysteria over the tenuous premise that the Russians pose some God-awful military threat, despite the fact that there has never been one tangible move on their part to indicate this.

One need not be a Communist sympathizer to appreciate that peace is essential to the development of their economic and social programs. Perhaps it has been good strategy to keep them bound in prohibitive military expenditure so the full strength of their energies cannot be diverted to internal growth, but under the aegis of this fellow we now have leading our country, the threat of our own economic collapse looms more and more plausible.

The vested interest of many tenuous political careers have fueled the fires of the myth of Soviet military intractability. Take away the political viability of this insistence, and you will have a president whose substance amounts to little more than the gas used to inflate colored balloons at a gala Hollywood premier.

With our constant renunciations against them, with our endless pronouncements of a determination to remove the stigma of their social order from the earth, are we really to expect them to benignly disarm and prepare to welcome our troops with garlands of flowers and jugs of vodka?

Lloyd Reinbeau
Frazesburg, Ohio

Oops

AS A NATIVE KENTUCKIAN I WAS MORE than pleased to see your coverage of the strip-mining dilemma in Kentucky. But I cannot contain my disappointment in seeing the state capital's misspelled. The correct spelling is Frankfort—not Frankfurt. It may not be the best known capital in the nation but it certainly deserves to be spelled correctly.

Aside from this, I have no complaints about *In These Times*. Keep up the fantastic work in keeping the left alive in the midst of Reagan's hell.

Karen J. Cutliff
Washington

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STY1

PERSPECTIVES

Can the Cold War be ended peacefully?

By Leon Wofsy

IS A NON-CATASTROPHIC END TO the Cold War possible? The movements most committed to the prevention of Armageddon have not faced this question directly. Strangely, the left in its many voices evades the issue—except for some who hint their answer would be "No." In contrast, the Reagan right asserts that superior American strength will prevail and the other side will "cry uncle."

I believe that the 15 years remaining to the 20th century can bring a historic turn away from the Cold War. This may seem a bizarre time for such a suggestion. The Reagan administration is riding high with MX, is out to crush Nicaragua, excuses mass murders by South Africa, is plunging ahead to Star Wars. The outlook for negotiations on arms control at Geneva is dismal. Yet this is the very time to appraise the prospects for derailing the Cold War.

The Reagan years have made the danger of U.S.-Soviet confrontation an immediate issue by its monumental effort to reverse erosion of American aspirations of world dominance. But to see only the danger is to overlook the possibility that Reagan's crusade to turn the world around may backfire and confirm the Cold War's failure.

The issue of humanity's survival in the nuclear age can't await resolution through socialism (which is far more complicated and long-term goal than any of us suspected). Nor is the Cold War likely to be ended by the collapse either of American or Soviet society. Contrary to Nikita Khrushchev's predictions in the '50s, and

to Ronald Reagan's now, it appears that neither social system will end up on the ash heap of history within the foreseeable future. At least not in the absence of nuclear war.

So, breaking away from the Cold War in time to escape catastrophe must be accomplished while many of the forces that generated the nuclear madness of the last 40 years are still with us.

Even so, the world has changed, and in ways that make the Cold War more futile and more difficult to sustain. Although the purposes it serves are mighty, it can fall under the weight of mounting liabilities.

A peaceful solution?

Serious hope for peaceful termination of the Cold War requires mutual commitment by the U.S. and the Soviet Union to prevent both nuclear war and conventional wars that could trigger catastrophe. That, of course, means stopping the arms race and reducing arms levels drastically, eventually enough to defang superpower rivalry for instant capacity for world annihilation.

While U.S.-Soviet hostility has deep and abiding roots, the Cold War is the particular product of the post-World War II era, when the two emerging nuclear superpowers came into direct competition for world leadership. With the collapse of colonial empires and rising support for some form of socialism, the USSR saw itself at the head of a Communist-Third World camp that could ultimately surpass the U.S. in the international arena. For its part, the U.S., confident of its power to create an American Century, played a most ambitious role in the post-war world. It assumed responsibilities and interests that weaker capitalist states could not maintain, seeking to check the anti-imperialist tide and to close the door on Third World revolution.

The Cold War was fashioned when each side could hope to prevail over the other,

when each could aspire to dominant status in the Third World, when nuclear might could be regarded as assurance of decisive political advantage. The historic difference between American and Soviet societies were thus given intense and deadly form. In this context, every international and domestic problem, every Third World conflict, was subordinated to the U.S.-Soviet antagonism.

Failures of the Cold War.

The Cold War system has persisted, according to Noam Chomsky, because it "is highly functional for the superpowers." Has the world changed enough to bring that into question?

The most awesome change, the achievement by each superpower of the capacity to exterminate life on earth, is known only too well. That has produced universal fear, but so far not the sanity to call off the race.

But there is a remarkable gap in today's world between military power and its effectiveness as political power. Military might now exceeds anything imagined not long ago, but there are also unprecedented barriers to its successful use in imposing ultimatums or winning wars.

Most important, this power has not proved great enough to control developments in the Third World. Guerrilla wars, revolutions, national and religious upheavals continue, but wars of intervention have become more difficult to mount and mostly fail to achieve their objectives. Against glorified military ventures in little Grenada and the Falklands, one must weigh the bitter frustrations of wars in Vietnam, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

The restraints on the effective use of military power are often credited to nuclear deterrence. But deterrence is essentially political. It is rooted in the universal fear of nuclear war, not in the stockpiles that constitute the "balance of terror." That conclusion is supported by the numerous examples since World War II when the use of nuclear weapons was under consideration. Several conflicts involved little or no probability of a retaliatory nuclear strike. It was fear of extreme political consequences that acted as a deterrent.

Continued on following page



Peter Hannan

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PERSPECTIVES

Continued from preceding page

Both sides have experienced major setbacks. The U.S. failed to win costly wars in Korea and Vietnam, and is unable to pacify the Third World and prevent revolutions even in the Central American "backyard." And there has been the pressure of rising economic challenges from Japan and Europe and the escalating burden of national debt.

The Soviet Union's vision of command over a unified Communist camp has also proved illusory. They have had to endure the collapse of the China alliance, significant failures in the Third World, popular opposition and unrest in Eastern Europe and, in addition, chronic shortages at home and a protracted war in Afghanistan. The obstacles to either superpower's prospects for world supremacy go well beyond fear of the other. That is seen best in the Third World. There, the "zero-sum" game breaks down badly. A defeat for American interests in Iran doesn't put the USSR in the driver's seat, and exclusion of the USSR from the negotiating process in the Middle East does not make possible a Pax Americana in the region.

From detente to Cold War II.

Even though detente in the '70s did not end the arms race or prevent resumption of the "new" Cold War, it reflected the beginnings of a reluctant adjustment to growing limitations on superpower expectations. Within the U.S. cracks appeared in pillars of popular faith in a Cold War view of the world. The "Vietnam syndrome" replaced belief in American invincibility with opposition to new military adventures. The myth of a monolithic Communist enemy under Soviet control became less acceptable as an explanation of revolution in the Third World.

Jimmy Carter discarded detente before Reagan got to the White House, but Reagan quickly made the new Cold War his own. He raised the stakes and changed the spirit in which it would be fought. Reagan brought America back to old crusades and delusions that had begun to break down under the strain of Vietnam. Again, the claims to supremacy are strident.

Yet a historic paradox may attach to the Reagan presidency. His effort to gain decisive victory in the Cold War and the arms race, to quell all the "hot spots" in the Third World, may create a response that finally compels a true change of course. If the most militant and militaristic cold warrior of all can't overcome the windmills of reality, who else will be able to accomplish it?

Reagan has begun his second administration with the intentions he brought to the White House. While the president's men have shown flexibility in adjusting the game plan, they are playing to win. Just as they think they could have won the Vietnam war, they believe they can win the Cold War. In the world according to the Gipper, no challenger can remain standing against Number One, against America's supreme military, technological, economic and moral might.

They may talk with the Soviets, even seek expedient agreements, but they have no thought of relaxing the military build-up. As a recent guidance document from the Heritage Foundation indicates, they expect to expand covert interventionist activity to provoke and exploit fissures in the Soviet system, to try to bring down any government viewed as an obstacle to the administration's strategies. In the Western Hemisphere, no independent government or revolutionary movement

will escape military and all other kinds of intervention. Clearly they intend to knock out Nicaragua and subdue Central America one way or another, and they will look for any opportunity to move against Cuba.

Yet there can be a large distance between intentions and capacity. This was evident in the first Reagan administration. Its successes were significant, but so were its failures.

It succeeded in spearheading political gains for the right not only at home, but in Europe. It aroused "born again" Americanism, which measures patriotism in equal parts of flag-waving, militarism and religious fundamentalism. It got its way with everything it demanded for unlimited arms expansion and for the deployment of Pershing and cruise missiles in Europe. In so doing, it gave accelerated momentum to basic drives that will be the greatest obstacle to curbing the arms race and ending the Cold War.

But Reagan also managed to frighten the world as never before about the extreme danger of nuclear war. The recklessness of the administration's conduct and rhetoric evoked alarm even among proponents of earlier Cold War policies. Despite his escape from potential consequences in the Lebanon disaster, it showed that Americans had no taste for high-risk military adventures. Early in 1984, Reagan's managers deemed it necessary to subdue the supreme Cold Warrior and project an image of the sincere, misunderstood peace advocate. So Reagan's second term began with the boost of a landslide vote, but high on the list of public expectations was movement toward arms control. And high on the list of public fears remains the sending of U.S. troops into combat in Central America.

In these circumstances, what happens with Nicaragua has taken on enormous importance not only for the present, but as a touchstone of the future. The administration's massive pressure may succeed in Central America. But if Nicaragua remains standing after Reagan has made so absolute a commitment to its downfall, it will be proof that the Cold War formula is no longer effective.

Soviet outlook.

How do Soviet perceptions fit into prospects for ending the Cold War?

The key requirement for a break with the Cold War is that both superpowers adjust their ambitions and policies to changed world reality, that neither retain the illusion that it can force the other into submission. By that standard, the Soviet leadership seems considerably more realistic and less reckless than the Reagan administration. There is no indication the Soviets believe they can establish military or technological superiority over the U.S., that they can pressure and subvert the U.S. into collapse or that they have the capacity to exclude American interests from the Third World.

But peace is menaced by any government that relies for its security on the level of death and destruction that defines a superpower. The priority the Soviet government assigns to its superpower military status, its determination not to allow countries within its sphere to get out of control, its fear of lowering barriers to alien influences—all of these feed and are fed by the Cold War.

Imbedded in the Soviet view of Russian history and of post-revolution experience is the absolute resolve not to fall behind in the arms race. That impulse is as perilous and damaging for the Soviet Union as is the goal of military supremacy for the U.S. Yet the USSR is permeated with a searing memory and fear of war. The overkill capacity of both sides contributes to the world's terror, but the Reagan administration is pushing the competitive

military build-up to new frontiers, and it regards arms control as the enemy.

The Third World governments and liberation movements that are most beleaguered by American military pressure and interventionism generally seek support from the USSR. The Soviets will not accede to the exclusively American rights in the Third World. But they lack the economic motivation that underlies U.S. policy. Nor do they have the military and political range, the tremendous emphasis on rapid deployment forces and far-flung bases, that characterize Reagan's worldwide police mission.

There may well be fear among some Soviet leaders that a relaxation of international tensions would be accompanied by increased pressures for internal change and expression of dissent. Still, there is absolutely nothing to suggest that such fears add up to a fundamental need or desire to subject Soviet society to the pressures of an unlimited military and



Peter Hannan

technological race with the U.S. On the contrary, there are strong indications that the Soviets would welcome a mutual backing off from the Cold War.

Turning point.

Some facts of life make continuation of the Cold War seem inexorable. There is the recognition of how deeply militarism and the arms program are entrenched in the current economic structure of our society. The corporate system depends on mammoth military expenditures, and commitments made in 1985 reach far into the future. There is the conviction that the drive to protect, control and expand economic interests all over the world is in the very nature of advanced capitalism, especially as crisis deepens and competition becomes more feverish. To let up on the Cold War is to be deprived of elaborate camouflage essential to intervention in the Third World.

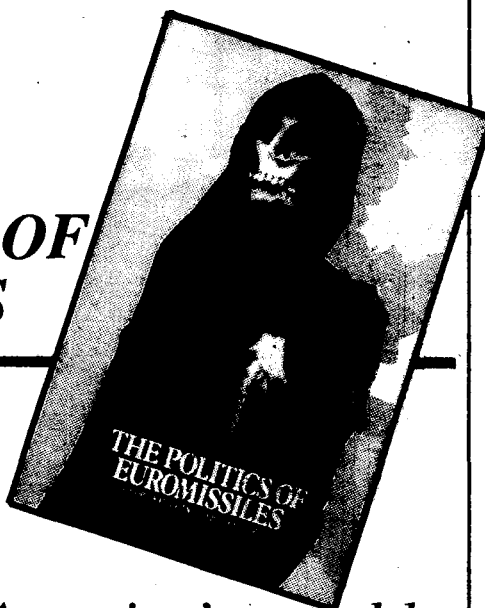
The point, however, is not to expect the system to become benign, to alter the character of its basic drives. It is that there are possibilities for forcing adjustments to new realities from which there is no escape.

It is no historical novelty for nations to accommodate, however reluctantly, to sweeping changes in world power relationships. Even though the social order did not undergo transformation in Britain, France and other European powers, these governments were compelled to preside over the liquidation of most of their colonial holdings. Of course, acceptance of such new realities generally has followed wars or rebellion of colonies. It remains to be seen whether equivalent influence can be exerted by struggles within our own society.

Leon Wofsy recently retired as professor of immunology at the University of California, Berkeley.

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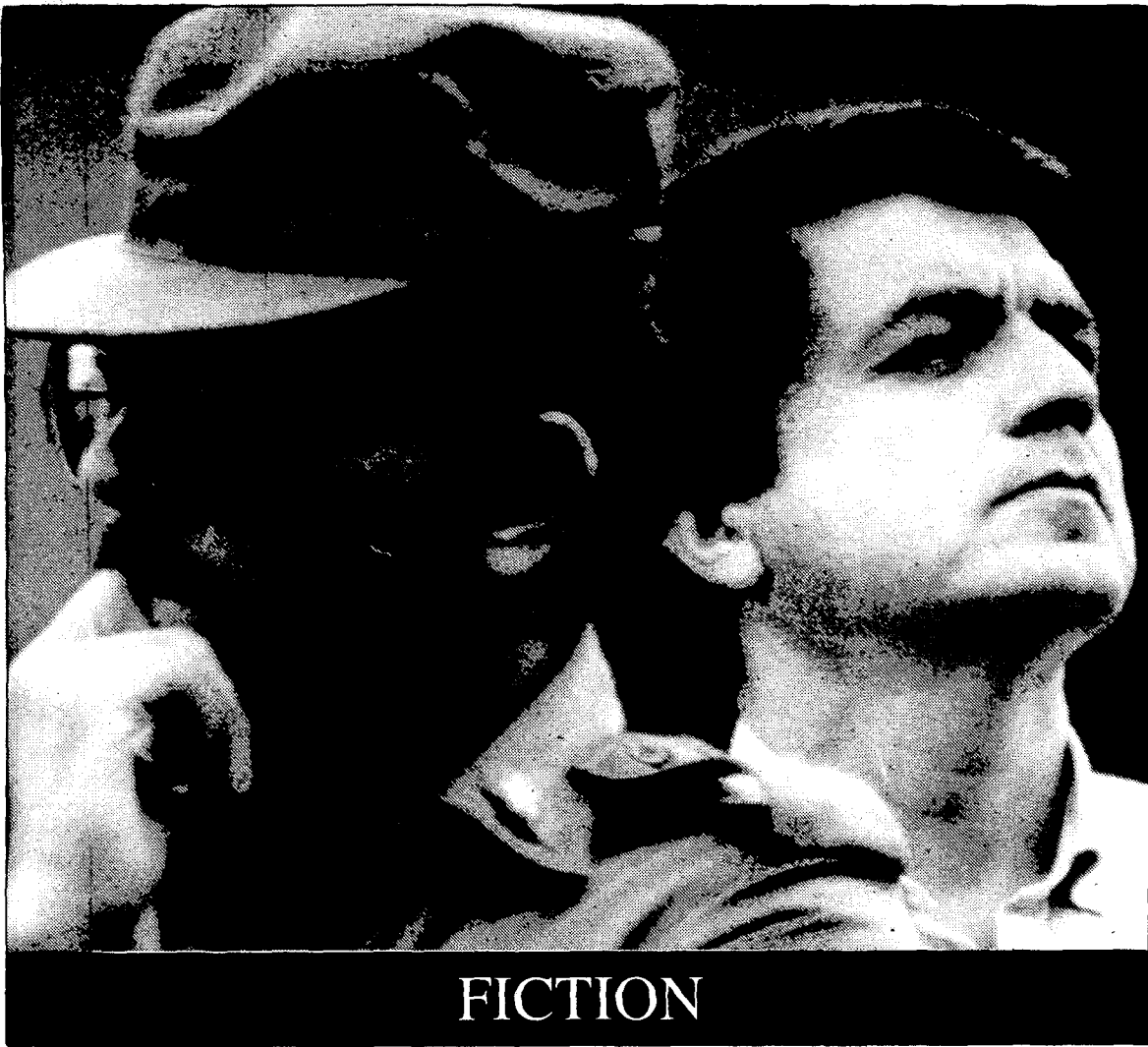
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FICTION

The spirit of rebellion

To Bury Our Fathers: A Novel of Nicaragua

By Sergio Ramírez
Translated by Nick Caistor
Readers International,
300 pp., \$8.95

By Dan Bellm

TO BURY OUR FATHERS BY Sergio Ramírez, Nicaragua's foremost novelist and now vice president, dramatizes the bleakest Somoza years (1930-61) and invites us to appraise their meaning ourselves. The novel's six separate tales steadily connect to form an intricate portrait of three rebellious

generations.

The book begins in a barroom in Guatemala City, 1957, where three exiled rebels, Taleno, Jilguero and Indio, prepare to take revenge on the vicious National Guard Col. Catalino Lopez. Interspersed throughout the book with this seductively slow revenge plot is Col. Lopez's narration of his own crimes; he began his career in the '30s by helping the U.S. Marines hunt down Sandino. Indio himself was once the colonel's cohort, the office functionary who "typed out Sandino's secret death warrant" and organized the murder's cover-up, but a mixture of self-disgust and self-interest led

him to stage a series of comic palace revolts. To Taleno and Jilguero's more militant generation Indio is equal parts mentor and lovable old joke.

The scene shifts to Taleno's boyhood in the '30s, wandering the Atlantic coast with his father, a roving charlatan and peddler of "hand mirrors, ribbons, perfumed cakes of soap, quinine, Solka rouge, cholagogo, purgatives...." Taleno's father eventually becomes a loyal watchdog in the Managua marketplace for *el hombre*—the name Somoza is never mentioned—and Taleno is placed in the National Guard academy as a reward, but later re-

Nicaragua's President Ortega and Vice President Ramírez. When the rebellion fails, it's Col. Lopez who tortures him, plunging him headfirst down a well, caging him among panthers.

Elsewhere, Jilguero, fighting alongside Taleno and the nightclub singer Raul as a guerrilla in 1959, recalls his grandfather who was elected president in 1941 but robbed of his victory by *el hombre*. Reduced to madness, the old man paces up and down in his courtyard, "The presidential sash smeared with swallow droppings still draped across his chest."

Surprisingly, *To Bury Our Fathers* stops at the most sombre point of Nicaraguan history. In 1961 all opposition, both electoral and armed, seems to have been utterly scattered. *El hombre's* second son is firmly in power and the colonel is living happily with his "adopted daughter," Miss Nicaragua of 1953. Taleno, Raul and Jilguero's quixotic uprising has been crushed. Indio dies in Guatemala, and his son comes to collect the body, but the boy cares neither about politics nor the pathetic mournerless funeral. He's more interested in boxing, under the politically blasphemous name "Kid Bolivar." All that remains of Indio's "revolution" is a Quaker Oats box of yellowed news-clippings.

A crucial historical fact Ramírez doesn't use is that the Sandinista Front was also founded in 1961, and after completing this novel in 1975 he returned to Nicaragua from exile to join the revolution himself; with the 1979 victory he became a civilian member of the government junta. Such a supporter of the revolution might be expected to urge his faith on others, but Ramírez's concern with the past is humbler than that. His characters are battered survivors restoring their fathers to memory, honoring and forgiving

them, laying them to rest. These are acts of grief, for which solace is as unfitting as despair.

The novel's alternation of plots is confusing at first, but it's the confusion and suspense of a good detective story in which snap judgments won't work. Ramírez is generous to heroes, villains and fools alike, because he understands that the lines of demarcation between them so easily blur. Even as the "revenge" scene develops the colonel and Indio are more

Sergio Ramírez recovers Nicaraguan history without a trace of "Sandinista realism."

like old comrades than mortal enemies. Plenty of others such as the likeable barman Chepito play both sides of the political game, preferring the company of free-thinkers but running paid errands for the colonel just to be safe. Ramírez is the kind of moralist who concedes each of his characters their mystery, but with an irreverent laugh.

Ramírez clearly guides us to sympathize with the spirit of rebellion and the ordinary people whose stories keep it alive. *To Bury Our Fathers*, brilliantly translated by Nick Caistor, proves that a revolutionary writer can recover Nicaraguan history without a trace of "Sandinista realism."

Dan Bellm, a New York-based freelance journalist, traveled to Nicaragua in January.

ECONOMICS

Debunking the myths of the conservatives

The Economic Illusion: False Choices Between Economic Efficiency and Social Justice

By Robert Kuttner
Houghton Mifflin, 288 pp., \$19.95

By David Bensman

WHEREVER YOU TURN today, there are conservative economic ideas. The need to cut spending, to bring down labor costs, to promote free trade: these ideas dominate public discussion and both political parties.

If you've ever found yourself on the verge of losing faith in your critique of capitalist economics, rush out to your neighborhood bookstore and buy Bob Kuttner's brilliant book. Buy several and give them to all those former friends who have already gone over to the other side. By the time you finish reading *The Economic Illusion*, you'll have a whole list of people who simply have to read this book.

Kuttner takes aim at the idea that unites all current versions of conservative political economy, the notion that if you want to stimulate economic growth, you have to accept and promote economic inequality. In a methodical, thoroughgoing series of chapters on taxes, trade, labor and capital, Kuttner demolishes the notion that there are inevitable "trade-

offs" between efficiency and equity: instead, he argues, different societies reach different social bargains. Among those countries with the best economic track records in the past decade—Sweden and Austria, for example—are some with the highest degrees of social justice.

Kuttner's use of empirical studies and particular examples are plentiful and persuasive. After reading this book, you'll never fall for the argument that high inheritance taxes discourage entrepreneurship. By piling up example after example, in one sector of the economy after another, Kuttner builds a solid case that the particular combination of relatively unfettered entrepreneurship, and relatively stingy welfare programs that prevail in the U.S. and Great Britain is the worst possible recipe for a healthy economy. It breeds high rates of inflation and unemployment at the same time.

Nations where social programs are generous and employment is full have much better results, Kutt-

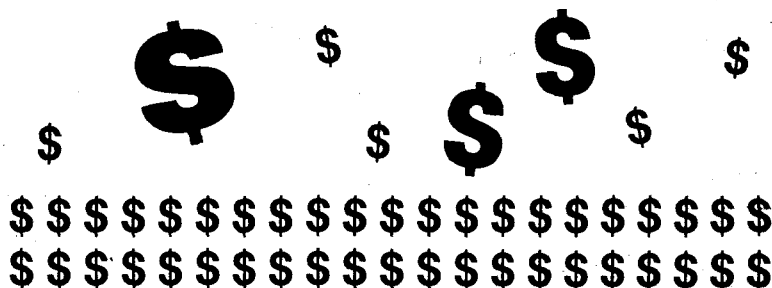
ner argues, because in those societies citizens have greater security, and are therefore willing to trade illusory wage gains for programs that channel corporate activity into directions that achieve long-term growth. In the social corporatist model Kuttner favors, a strong labor movement is essential, for it is the only mechanism that can make worker solidarity a powerful actor at the public bar-

gaining table.

Although Kuttner's empirical destruction of the conservatives' cause for unfettered greed is impressive, even more significant is his resurrection of old-fashioned Keynesian economic theory to explain the new global problems of the '80s. Keynes' argument that the capitalist system's tendency toward underconsumption underlay the prolonged depression of the '30s is equally pertinent today.

Fifty years ago, the vast army of unemployed and poorly paid workers were unable to consume the products of the oligopolistic corporations; today it's the factory workers of Malaysia, Mexico and Martinique who cannot buy the clothing, automobiles and computers that they manufacture.

If you've lost faith in your critique of capitalist economics, read this book.



As business people strive to make profits in world markets that are much too small because Third World wages are much too low, the courses of action open to entrepreneurs are self-defeating. They can increase production, in order to gain the benefit of lower marginal operating costs as their capacity utilization increases, but as many businesses do so, they only glut the market. As they cut labor costs, they only diminish purchasing power further. As business people shift their capital into non-manufacturing uses, they further impoverish the Third World without increasing mass purchasing power in the First World. It's a classic Keynesian problem, Kuttner rightly argues.

Does Kuttner's argument ignore the economic recovery and the fantastic spurt of job creation in the private sector that is the Reagan administration's pride and joy. Not really. Once Kuttner establishes a Keynesian framework, it isn't hard to see how the Reagan administration used military spending increases and tax decreases to create the perverse prosperity that parts of the U.S. are now enjoying.

David Bensman is director of the graduate program in labor studies at Rutgers University and is the author of *The Practice of Solidarity: American Hatters in the Nineteenth Century*.



ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

POP CULTURE

Marketing benevolence

By Richard Gehr

U.S.A. FOR AFRICA'S "We Are the World" single has quickly racked up \$200 million sales, and an enormous amount of money has yet to be spent on such subsidiary USA for Africa products as T-shirts, videos, LPs, extended mixes and lunchpails (just kidding). But as fans of Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder and Bruce Springsteen dig ever deeper into their pockets in support of the eradication of world hunger, how many of us have stopped to think exactly why such a mildly stirring piece of pop fluff rouses us to such depths of generosity?

The project was directly inspired by the example of "Do They Know It's Christmas?," a similar effort by British rockers that became the bestselling single in British pop history. USA for Af-

rica was reportedly set into motion by superstar agent Ken Kragen last December, following a phone call from Harry Belafonte. Kragen is best known as Lionel Richie's manager, which may have something to do with the crooner's conspicuous presence as the first voice heard in the song as well as the function he fills as group spokesperson in the HBO TV show filmed during the recording session.

Though the message of the British single is one of us—the generous guys—against those lacking a social conscience, the American version was carefully worded to emphasize the universality of suffering and solidarity. No sides are taken by this bunch of great communicators. In fact, I'm unable to recall a single partisan remark having issued from any of these hypervisible stars (with the exception of Wonder) in recent years.

It's even possible that in the last presidential election more than half the personalities involved voted to reinstate the man whose economic policies are at least partially responsible for the 20 million hungry Americans to whom 10 percent of the records profits are promised. It's rather frightening that precious few of these rich and famous figures have raised their voices to denounce the political conditions that would make this effort necessary in the first place.

Selling celebrity.

USA for Africa appropriates the most sophisticated marketing equipment of popular entertainment in the service of a humanitarian ideal or two. "Make no mistake about it: *We are the World* has been compiled to capitalize and expand on the extraordinary success of the title song," reads Columbia Records' publicity statement for the album. The same advertising and publicity ploys that made "superstars" out of the likes of Billy Joel, Cyndi Lauper

Many of pop music's elite took part in U.S.A. for Africa.

and Huey Lewis now sells a product whose value is once again the star quality of the personalities involved, in the name of appeasing human suffering several thousand miles away. When we purchase "We Are the World," we are buying into the charisma of Stevie Wonder, Springsteen, Diana Ross, or whichever other of these pop personalities we identify with. I mean, would anybody have bought this record if it had been recorded by Slim Whitman, Jim Nabors and Anne Murray? I think not.

Look at the video that was filmed following the recording session. It begins with a screen full of autographs scrawled by the stars involved. These signatures are what the music consumer has come to expect from the recording industry, and he or she pays according to the fidelity with which the goods are delivered. Thus throughout the song we hear solos delivered like trademark vocal signatures. Springsteen sounds more like Springsteen than ever before, Dylan almost like a parody of the Dylan we have come to expect, and so on.

For a more aesthetically satisfying musical effort in the same spirit, I strongly suggest picking up "Starvation," b/w "Tam Tam pour l'Ethiopie" (Virgin import), a bewitching effort combining the talents of some of Britain's most talented reggae musicians and, on the flip side, many of Africa's own musical giants.

But we have to admit that with "We Are the World," the tricks have been employed to good effect. If nothing else, USA for Africa has made the invisible visible by linking the fate of Africa's poor with the faces and voices of the most high-profile personalities of our time. And it does contain a certain kind of truth. Michael Jackson, Dylan, Springsteen, Ross and the other celebrities are indeed the world as those familiar with mainstream American culture know it.

Richard Gehr is arts editor of the Los Angeles Reader.

MEDIA B E A T

With Friends and Enemies Like These

A new funding proposal has once again brought into the open the fuzzy conception of "public" in public broadcasting. The part-public, part-private funding base and a hostile administration—Reagan vetoed two funding bills for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting last year—has made times tougher. Recently, though, the Federal Communications Commission came up with a suggestion to boost public broadcasting's bank account. It offered to allow public stations on VHF channels (those up to 14 on the dial) to swap their place on the spectrum with UHF broadcasters. In return for taking a less desirable, weaker channel, they could get a chunk of cash to use as investment capital. The idea appealed to a few stations, including one in Tampa and the powerhouse WNET in New York, which immediately toyed publicly with the idea of getting a \$200 million nest-egg for moving uptown on the dial. But critics said the plan could gut the system. The CPB protested that the swaps would likely shrink the audience for public TV. In Congress, Rep. Tim Wirth (D-CO) warned, "If there is a diminution of the people who watch public broadcasting—in other words, if there is a trade of viewers for dollars by public broadcasting stations—then that just argues again for better funding for public broadcasting." Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) openly stated he thought the FCC's proposal would "destroy" public TV. The weightiest opponents, ironically, are private interests such as the Taft Broadcasting Corporation, which, like many other commercial broadcasters, wants no more competition down there in VHFland, where the money is.

Public Access Cable and Private Charity

Private support for public access channels is crucial in cable, which is not subject to public interest provisions in broadcast regulation. Typical franchise contracts include commitments by a cable company to support an access service. The franchise that the city of Boston recently wangled with Cablevision was supposed to be a model of hard bargaining: the city got a 16 percent cut of gross revenues, with nearly a third of that going to a public access foundation. But problems began when launching cable service proved more expensive than expected, and it came to a crisis when the bank cut off the company's line of credit in October. The company has scurried to make new financial arrangements and is cutting back the foundation cuts to 1 percent of gross revenues. The city has produced a report censuring the company for financial mismanagement, and argues that "the city should not be asked to share unfairly in the rescue operation." The company so far is simply refusing to pay; it owes the bulk of the \$250,000 payment owed to the access foundation April 1 and Cablevision officials flatly admit they have no intention of coming up with the rest. The Boston case could become a test of the ability of public access TV to survive recession in the cable industry.

Our Latin America, and Theirs

In an interview with *Village Voice* writer Enrique Fernandez, celebrated and controversial Mexican philosopher Octavio Paz commented on the peculiar blindness of North American writers toward the cultures of Latin America. "This sort of blindness is not due to a lack of talent—North Americans are very talented—nor to a lack of sensitivity," he said. "Instead, I think that it conforms to a historical pattern which is also reflected in their foreign policy and in their vision of the world, particularly of Latin America. Perhaps the explanation lies in the very origins of the American nation. The Founding Fathers wanted to build a utopia outside of history and Americans have had to adjust themselves to history. And not only to history, but to being an empire. They have the responsibilities of an empire which, in their hearts, they would rather not have." He continued, "There's authentic democratic debate about foreign policy in the U.S., which is marvelous.... But at the same time, North Americans are incapable of understanding others." Paz might have been commenting on the recent four-episode "Frontline" series on Central America, on public TV. It was remarkably fair and even-handed, within narrow limits—those set by a remark of President Reagan that was used repeatedly in the series without ever questioning his easy joining of the U.S. and hemispheric interests: "The national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere." The first episode, an impressive historical overview of American interventionism, set the tone for a series in which Central American conflicts were viewed through political battles conditioned by American foreign policy interests.

If It Don't Work, Don't Fix It

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Mark Fowler, in addressing a group of black lawyers recently, pressed his case for doing away with minority preferences in allocating licenses, by pointing to the abysmal record of minority ownership. "Today you own less than 2 percent of radio and TV stations," he said. "Those policies don't work.... Isn't it time to try something else?" The "something else" is a deregulated media marketplace dominated by mega-conglomerates. Fowler assured the lawyers that he wants a "color-blind society."

—Pat Aufderheide



Housing

Continued from page 5

with rising incomes which permitted the vast three-decade upgrading of America's housing inventory."

"One of the only ways out of this mess," argues Hartman, "is abandoning the traditional mortgage system. Just think, a \$60,000 mortgage to purchase an \$80,000 home, repaid over 30 years at about 12-14 percent interest, requires the owner to pay back up to \$256,000 during the life of the mortgage, nearly four-fifths of which is interest—profits to the bank."

"Suppose, instead of mortgages, housing credit were abandoned and housing built with one-time government capital grants? Monthly housing costs—for taxes, utilities, maintenance, insurance—would be more than halved," he continues.

"We can also ease the income-housing costs conflict by ending land and real estate speculation, banning exorbitant rent increases and condo conversions that force people out of their homes and neighborhoods. We can rely more heavily on non-profit housers (such as, community organizations, tenant cooperatives, churches and public agencies) to build and manage housing," he concludes.

John Atlas of the NTU believes innova-

tive policies are only part of the solution. "In addition to good policies and programs, there must be a political movement willing to fight for them and win. The present housing crisis is a result of the failure of progressive forces to mobilize a majority for reform," Atlas argues. "It's a political question—a question of which groups in society will steer the rudder of government policy."

The themes that unite most advocates of housing reform are "decommodification" of housing (i.e., removing as much of the housing system as possible from the drive to maximize profits); revising the income tax system as it affects housing; ensuring the protection of some 4.5 million units of existing government-aided stock; fighting for anti-eviction laws and promoting the

IN THESE TIMES MAY 1-7, 1985 15

idea of housing as an entitlement.

Mike Shay, spokesman for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)—a tenant rights group that conducts "squatting" campaigns, seizing abandoned buildings to dramatize the crisis—says his group will stage a series of demonstrations on May 14 to focus attention on the gravity of the problem. ■

CALENDAR

Use the calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$20.00 for one insertion, \$30.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

CHICAGO, IL

May 3

Romanovsky & Phillips, 8:00 p.m., Curtis Hall, Fine Arts Building, 410 S. Michigan Ave. \$7.00 at door, \$6.00 in advance. Tickets: Unabridged Books, Women and Children First, or call (312) 953-9478 or (312) 561-8814. Their wit and charm and soaring vocals, along with their informed gay and social consciousness will make for a memorable evening.

May 4

27th Annual Norman Thomas-Eugene V.

Debs Dinner. Honorees: Ed Asner, president Screen Actors Guild (AFL-CIO) and star of "Lou Grant" show; Vicky Starr, founding member, United Packinghouse Workers, featured in "Union Maids." Featured speaker: U.S. Rep. Lane Evans. Catered dinner included. \$30.00 per person. 6:00 p.m. at McCormick Hotel. Auspices Democratic Socialists of America. (312) 871-1986.

May 6

Dov Yermiya, leading peace activist, former colonel in Israeli army, author of *My War Diary* and co-secretary of Committee Against Racism and for Co-Existence in Israel, will speak on the struggle for peace and human rights in Israel. Sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee and New Jewish Agenda. 7:30 p.m. Peace Museum, 430 W. Erie. For more information call 427-2533.

LOS ANGELES, CA

May 4 & 11

Special book sale, Left, labor, political science from the surplus collection of the Southern California Library for Social Studies and

Research. 10-3, 6120 S. Vermont Ave.

BALTIMORE, MD

May 17

Attend an "Introduction to the Democratic Socialists of America," learn about our politics and activities; followed by a talk on current issues in the women's movement by Christine Ridiough, NOW's Director of Lesbian Rights and a national Vice Chair of DSA. 7:00-9:00 p.m., 1443 Gorsuch Ave., Waverly. Information: 467-9388.

MEDFORD, MA

June 3-7

Institute for Management and Community Development, Tufts University. Intensive courses in community economic development, democratic management, financial planning, housing development, decision-making, cooperative business development, marketing, computers, legal issues. For more information: Tufts University, Department of Urban and Environmental Policy, Medford, MA 02155, (617) 381-3549.

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Box 5391, Reno, NV 89513, (702) 786-4220.

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR: SF-based non-profit education center seeks experienced person to oversee development and fundraising program. Salary: \$18,400 plus benefits. Send resume and letter to: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1885 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94103.

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APARTHEID

BY PAT AUFDERHEIDE

THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY BROKE BOX OFFICE records in Europe before being launched in the U.S., where it has gone on to become the offbeat charmer of baby boom professionals. Its European platform put a chic gloss on the funky foreign film. Made by South African filmmaker Jamie Uys on the border of Botswana, it is a fable about the ironies of civilization when imposed on primitive peoples.

The plot revolves around a Coca-Cola bottle that falls from an airplane into a village of !Kung bushmen. The bottle causes first curiosity and then dissension, and tribal leader Mputi decides to return it to its owners. On the way he encounters a white biologist, clumsily trying to have a love affair with a woman who has fled the irritation of office life to teach natives in the bush; SWAPO-ish guerrillas, led by a white fanatic, fleeing their botched coup attempt; and a black policeman, a disenfranchised primitive thrust unhappily into repressive responsibilities. The film expertly balances slapstick and sentiment; its happy ending comes when the !Kung hero finally abolishes the relic of civilization and returns to primitive peace.

So what are all those black people doing in picket lines in front of the theaters? In major cities across the U.S., protests against *The Gods Must Be Crazy* have been held, linked with wider protests against apartheid in South Africa.

Is *The Gods Must Be Crazy* a winsome and ironic critique of white civilization as seen from the perspective of a wiser, simpler culture, or is it a slyly racist justification of apartheid policy? White people who work in offices tend to see the first film, while blacks see the second. And that second view is virtually invisible in mainstream media coverage of the film.

Nomads in Bushmanland.

Blacks have pointed out the film's flattering distortions of basic facts about South African life, starting from opening scenes of an integrated workplace, and going on to a Keystone Kops version of black resistance. But the most grievous indignity is in the portrayal of the !Kung San people.

In real life, the !Kung San, once nomads with expert knowledge of how to live in a desert region, have been herded into a corner of their former territory. Some 2,000 of them live dependent on handouts of food in rural slums and around army camps in what is now called Bushmanland. Their per capita income of 360 rands a year comes largely from income garnered by young men who work as trackers for the South African Army, in pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas.

The money would buy around two pounds a day of the South African staple mealmeal for each family member, if it were equally distributed. Most often, though, money given to a few men is squandered. The government has just taken away the land where !Kung have watering holes for the cattle herds providing their one means of independence. As John Marshall, an anthropological expert on !Kung culture, wrote in *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, it is now "a society of haves and have nots in which most people have nothing to do and not enough to eat." One of the actors in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* is the subject of a film Marshall co-produced, *N!Ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman*. In it, N!Ai recounts how she and others had to take off their clothes to look primitive, playing parts in the kinds of huts they can no longer live in; her salary, she says, has made her neighbors jealous. In short, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* is not just wrong or romantic about the !Kung. It's carefully constructed as a mirror opposite of the conditions of !Kung existence under apartheid.

Suppose, though, we take our endearing hero as an icon of purity, an aesthetic foil, if you will, for the alienation of civilization. That way, Mputi looks to many

like an even more disingenuous stereotype. As a generic African, he then represents a voluntary refusal of equality in the white-dominated world. If primitives eschew the burdens and tensions of civilization—if all they want to do is sing and dance out there in the bush—then isn't the kindest thing to let them go home to their homelands?

Although Uys denies he wanted to do anything more than make a comedy, he is no political innocent. Far from the American image of an embattled independent filmmaker, he is well-off and a well-regarded figure in official circles. An earlier film of his, *Dingaka*, gives you a hint as to why: the film features a hero who chooses to renounce the city for the good life in a homeland. Uys surely is aware of this film's controversiality. He has worked hard to make it appear to be a production from the bordering nation of Botswana.

Cultural boycott.

Uys needed no help from South African officials to design a romance of separate and unequal cultures. As a large landowner on the Botswana border, he can grow his opinions on his own turf. But the South African government struck it rich when *The Gods Must Be Crazy* did. In an increasing panic over its international image, the South African regime has poured immense amounts of money over the last few years into positive PR abroad. It has defunded U.S. public schools with free "educational" materials. It has heavily promoted such cultural events as the Durban International Film Festival, where, organizers note, both black and white directors can show their works and discuss them. (Black attendance at the films is minimal—the admission price alone excludes most of them; and, as the African National Congress noted in a request to filmmakers to boycott the festival, "there can be no normal cultural interaction in an abnormal society.") It has paid hefty fees to lure American black performers to its pleasure capital Sun City. Stevie Wonder reportedly refused an offer of \$5 million.

The government does its best to discredit the cultural boycott of South Africa that the ANC first called in 1958, and that a series of UN resolutions has made a matter of international consensus. Recent controversy over inclusion of performers for a UN-sponsored benefit for the African drought victims is a signal that the cultural boycott is alive, while a record number of submissions to the Durban festival indicates that it is far from universal. The widespread enthusiasm for Uys' latest film, among people who by and large detest apartheid, is alarming to ANC officials who are well aware that international public opinion is a weapon in the longer battle.

For many white and middle-class people who don't dwell much on South Africa in a day anyway, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* subtly softens the brutal pictures that the South African government paints for itself when unarmed children are shot during funerals. And, after all...it's only a movie. Small wonder black people are so upset when they see long lines going into the theater, with many of the patrons coming back a second time.

For those who, like this reviewer, saw this film's charms more quickly than its distortions, it pays to think about the film's role as publicist for imaginary options. And its dramatically different receptions among blacks is testimony to profoundly divided cultural experience in a country that, officially, is so far past racism that it barely needs a Civil Rights Commission anymore. ■

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For further information on the cultural boycott, contact the African National Congress, 801 2nd Ave., 4th fl., NY NY 10017, and UN Centre against Apartheid, UN, NY 10017. About the !Kung, contact Cultural Survival, 11 Divinity Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138. For information on N!Ai, write Documentary Educational Resources, 5 Bridge St., Watertown, MA 02172. For other films on South Africa, write California Newsreel, 630 Natoma, San Francisco, CA 94103. Film picket efforts are local; in New York, contact Southern Africa Solidarity Coalition, 126 W. 119th St., NY 10026.

AESTHETICS